

**The Development of Virginia Woolf's
Late Cultural Criticism, 1930-1941**

Alice Wood

**A PhD thesis submitted to
De Montfort University**

June 2010

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Acknowledgments

A number of people have directly or indirectly enabled me to complete this thesis. First and foremost, I would like to thank my two supervisors, Professor Andrew Thacker and Professor Heidi Macpherson, whose guidance, expertise and thorough feedback on drafts have deeply enriched this project. I also gratefully acknowledge the contribution of my original supervisor, Professor Julia Briggs, whose enthusiastic input shaped this thesis in its initial stages and helped secure the funding needed to undertake it. I greatly appreciate the assistance of a De Montfort University Research Student Bursary during this period of study. In addition I owe a large debt to family, friends and, in particular, Alexei Lambley-Steel, for their tolerance, understanding and regular provision of welcome distractions in the final year of this project. Finally, special thanks to my parents for their unwavering encouragement and support.

A version of Chapter 2 of this thesis has been published in *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 32: 1 (2010). A revised section of Chapter 4 appears in *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 76 (2009).

Abstract

This thesis explores the development of Virginia Woolf's late cultural criticism. While contemporary scholars commonly observe that Woolf shifted her intellectual focus from modernist fiction to cultural criticism in the 1930s, there has been little sustained examination of why and how Woolf's late cultural criticism evolved during 1930-1941. This thesis aims to contribute just such an investigation to the field.

My approach here fuses a feminist-historicist approach with the methodology of genetic criticism (*critique génétique*), a French school of textual studies that traces the evolution of literary works through their compositional histories. Reading across published and unpublished texts in Woolf's oeuvre, my genetic, feminist-historicist analysis of Woolf emphasises that her late cultural criticism developed from her early feminist politics and dissident aesthetic stance as well as in response to the tempestuous historical circumstances of 1930-1941.

As a prelude to my investigation of Woolf's late output, Chapter 1 traces the genesis of Woolf's cultural criticism in her early biographical writings. Chapter 2 then scrutinises Woolf's late turn to cultural criticism through six essays she produced for *Good Housekeeping* in 1931. Chapter 3 surveys the evolution of Woolf's critique of patriarchy in *Three Guineas* (1938) through the voluminous pre-publication documents that link this innovative feminist-pacifist pamphlet to *The Years* (1937). Finally, Chapter 4 outlines how Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), fuses fiction with cultural criticism to debate art's social role in times of national crisis. The close relationship between formal and political radicalism in Woolf's late cultural criticism, I conclude, undermines the integrity of viewing Woolf's oeuvre in two distinct phases – the modernist 1920s and the socially-engaged 1930s – and suggests the danger of using such labels in wider narratives of interwar literature. Woolf's late cultural criticism, this thesis argues, developed from rather than rejected her earlier experimentalism.

Abbreviations

All references to the following works by Virginia Woolf in this thesis are to these editions unless otherwise stated.

- AROO* *A Room of One's Own. A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach, 1-149. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- BA* *Between the Acts*. Edited by Stella McNichol with an introduction and notes by Gillian Beer. London: Penguin, 2000.
- CE 1-4* *Collected Essays*. Edited by Leonard Woolf. 4 Vols. London: Hogarth, 1966-1967.
- D 1-5* *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Edited by Anne Olivier Bell with Andrew McNeillie. 5 Vols. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977-1984.
- E 1-5* *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. Edited by Andrew McNeillie and Stuart N. Clarke. 5 Vols to date. London: Hogarth, 1986-.
- HH* *A Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction*. Edited by Susan Dick with an introduction by Helen Simpson. London: Vintage, 2003.
- JR* *Jacob's Room*. Edited by Sue Roe. London: Penguin, 1992.
- L 1-6* *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. Edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. 6 Vols. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977-1982.
- MB* *Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings*. Edited by Jeanne Schulkind with an introduction by Hermione Lee. London: Pimlico, 2002.
- MD* *Mrs Dalloway*. Edited by Stella McNichol with an introduction and notes by Elaine Showalter. London: Penguin, 1992.
- O* *Orlando: A Biography*. Edited by Brenda Lyons with an introduction and notes by Sandra M. Gilbert. London: Penguin, 2000.
- PA* *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals, 1897-1909*. Edited by Mitchell A. Leaska. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1990.

- PH Pointz Hall: The Earlier and Later Typescripts of Between the Acts.*
 Edited by Mitchell A Leaska. New York: University Publications, 1983.
- RF Roger Fry: A Biography.* Edited by Diane F. Gillespie. Oxford:
 Shakespeare Head Press, 1995.
- TG Three Guineas. A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas,* ed. Morag
 Shiach, 151-414. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- TP The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years.* Edited by
 Mitchell A. Leaska. London: Hogarth, 1978.
- TTL To the Lighthouse.* Edited by Stella McNichol with an introduction and
 notes by Hermione Lee. London: Penguin, 2000.
- VO The Voyage Out.* Edited by Lorna Sage. Oxford: Oxford University
 Press, 2001.
- VW: MA Virginia Woolf: Major Authors.* Edited by Mark Hussey. CD-ROM.
 Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Media, 1997.
- W The Waves.* Edited by Kate Flint. London: Penguin, 2000.
- Y The Years.* Edited by Hermione Lee. Oxford: Oxford University Press,
 1999.

Introduction:

Woolf in the 1930s and Beyond

To many she must have appeared as an angular, remote, odd, perhaps rather intimidating figure, a fragile middle-aged poetess, a sexless Sappho and, as the crisis of the decade drew to its terrible conclusion, oddly irrelevant – a distressed gentlewoman caught in a tempest and making little effort either to fight against it or to sail before it.

Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography* (1972)¹

Quentin Bell's depiction of Virginia Woolf in the 1930s as 'a distressed gentlewoman caught in a tempest' has long been rewritten. A more recent biography of Woolf casts her as 'a serious political thinker' in her late writings.² Scholarly conceptions of Woolf, her novels and her criticism have been transformed in the forty years since Bell's biography of his aunt was published through the insights of feminism, new historicism, post-colonialism and cultural studies. While all Woolf's writings have been radically re-evaluated, her late output has received the most dramatic reinterpretation. The decade in which contemporary critics once caricatured Woolf as frail, apolitical and obsolete is now, paradoxically, the decade in which she is perceived to have been most socially and politically active. Merry M. Pawlowski (2001) describes Woolf's 1938 polemic *Three Guineas* as 'the strongest example in her oeuvre of Woolf working as a contemporary cultural critic'; Linden Peach (2007) refers to Woolf's "'social realist" work of the 1930s.'³ The representation of Woolf as a social and political commentator in the 1930s is now so familiar in Woolf studies that to observe that she directed her attention away from experimental fiction in this period to concentrate on unravelling the links between patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism and war has become something of a cliché. Yet the question of why and how Woolf emerged as a public critic of British society and politics in this historically eventful decade has never been comprehensively addressed; there has hitherto been no detailed examination of the thinking and writing processes through which Woolf's cultural criticism evolved in the years 1930-1941.

¹ Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, 2 Vols. (London: Paladin, 1987), 2: 185.

² Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Penguin, 2006), 337; see Chapters 11, 12 and 14.

³ Merry M. Pawlowski, introduction to *Virginia Woolf and Fascism: Resisting the Dictators' Seduction*, ed. Merry M. Pawlowski (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 4; Linden Peach, 'Historical Approaches,' in *Palgrave Advances in Woolf Studies*, ed. Anna Snaith (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 171.

This thesis supplies the first thorough investigation into the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism, predominately focussing on her essays but also with reference to her fiction. My project is unique in synthesising the principles of the French school of genetic criticism (*critique génétique*) with a feminist-historicist approach to Woolf. Genetic criticism, 'an unfamiliar name for what, to many, will be a familiar critical procedure,' is an interpretative method of manuscript study that traces the evolution of literary works through their early drafts, or *avant-textes* ('pre-texts').⁴ The discipline theorises a mode of literary scrutiny that dates back to the rise of Romanticism in the eighteenth century when writers and critics first began to view working manuscripts as objects worthy of preservation and examination.⁵ Broadly conceived, genetic analysis can be described as any attempt to seek textual genesis in the variant texts of a work, whether in manuscript or in print; from this perspective, Graham Falconer sees 'Helen Gardner's monograph on the composition of "Four Quartets"' and 'Jon Stallworthy's books on the evolving style of Yeats' as 'representative examples.'⁶ Yet contemporary genetic criticism differentiates itself from these studies of textual genesis through its materialist attention to the historical circumstances inscribed in textual compositions, an aspect of genetic criticism that opportunely accords with a feminist-historicist critical framework. In this study I expand this outlook to trace the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism through a selection of her published and unpublished texts. My approach adapts the analytical methods of genetic criticism to produce a genetic, feminist-historicist exploration of the ways in which Woolf's late cultural criticism evolved from her previous writing and thinking as well as in response to the tempestuous economic, social and political circumstances of 1930-1941. Rather than reading Woolf's later, more socially-engaged works as a departure from her modernist fiction of the 1920s, this thesis interprets Woolf's late output as an extension of the innovative feminist politics and aesthetic experimentalism of her earlier oeuvre.

⁴ Graham Falconer, 'Genetic Criticism,' *Comparative Literature* 45: 1 (1993): 3.

⁵ Frank Paul Bowman, 'Genetic Criticism,' *Poetics Today* 11: 3 (1990): 629-630.

⁶ Falconer, 'Genetic Criticism,' 3. See Helen Gardner, *The Composition of 'Four Quartets'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), Jon Stallworthy, *Between the Lines: Yeats' Poetry in the Making* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) and Stallworthy, *Vision and Revision in Yeats' 'Last Poems'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

The close relationship between Woolf's aesthetic viewpoint and her feminist politics makes the ambiguous label of 'cultural criticism' particularly pertinent to a study of Woolf's writings in the 1930s and early 1940s. To justify this contention I begin this thesis with an enquiry into what the terms 'cultural criticism' and 'cultural critic' might mean, chiefly with regard to their use in Woolf studies. This introduction then presents four brief critical surveys which together set the scene for this project. The first provides an overview of British society, politics and literature in the 1930s, situating the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism within its historical and literary context. The second summarises Woolf's major fictional and non-fictional outputs, with a focus on her late career and contemporary critical responses to her writing in this period. The third reviews later scholarly reactions to Woolf, highlighting the key theoretical trends and revisionist readings that have established the now prevalent view of Woolf as an important social and political commentator in the 1930s and beyond. Finally, the fourth survey introduces genetic criticism and my genetic approach to Woolf in this thesis. This section also offers an outline of my thesis chapters. Before exploring the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism any further, however, it will be necessary to address the question, 'What is cultural criticism?'

What is Cultural Criticism?

The term 'cultural criticism' has gained such academic weight in the arts and social sciences that students at Cardiff University in Wales in 2009/2010 may undertake a Bachelor degree in the subject.⁷ Nonetheless, defining exactly what cultural criticism is remains challenging as the term may denote a number of different methods of examining culture, a word which in itself can be diversely interpreted. Writing in 1995 Arthur Asa Berger described cultural criticism as 'an activity, not a discipline per se,' which brings together a wide variety of late twentieth-century theoretical approaches:

Cultural criticism can involve literary and aesthetic theory and criticism, philosophical thought, media analysis, popular cultural criticism, interpretive

⁷ 'BA in Cultural Criticism,' in *Cardiff University Undergraduate Prospectus* [Web site and database] (Cardiff University, 2009); available from <<http://courses.cardiff.ac.uk/undergraduate/course/detail/691.html>>; accessed 22 March 2010.

theories and disciplines (semiotics, psychoanalytic theory, Marxist theory, sociological and anthropological theory, and so on), communication studies, mass media research, and various other means of making sense of contemporary (and not so contemporary) culture and society.⁸

Rather than a formalised, uniform method of study then, ‘cultural criticism’ is a convenient umbrella term adopted in today’s post-theory context by critics and editors from diverse theoretical backgrounds to describe wildly differing scholarly practices.⁹ A large proportion of present-day notions of cultural criticism derive from the field of cultural studies that rose to prominence in the late 1970s and 1980s. Yet the practice of analysing culture can be traced back much further as Raymond Williams identified in *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958), a founding document of contemporary cultural studies and itself a pioneering work of modern cultural criticism.¹⁰

In *Culture and Society* Williams outlines a series of fundamental shifts that have taken place in British society since the late eighteenth century and surveys the ways in which a number of British intellectuals have responded to these shifts. Williams contends that ‘a general change in our characteristic ways of thinking about our common life’ can be witnessed through the changing use of five key words in the industrial era; ‘industry,’ ‘democracy,’ ‘class,’ ‘art’ and, most significantly, ‘culture.’¹¹ Before industrialism and the rise of democracy in Britain in the late eighteenth century, Williams details, the word culture ‘meant, primarily, the “tending of natural growth,” and then, by analogy, a process of human training.’¹² During the nineteenth century this usage changed, however, and ‘culture’ began to signify ‘a thing in itself’:

It came to mean, first, ‘a general state or habit of the mind,’ having close relations with the idea of human perfection. Second ... ‘the general state of intellectual development, in a society as a whole.’ Third ... ‘the general body of

⁸ Arthur Asa Berger, *Cultural Criticism: A Primer of Key Concepts* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), 2-3.

⁹ Compare, for example, Mae Henderson, ed., *Borders, Boundaries and Frames: Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and Jacqueline Bobo, ed., *Black Feminist Cultural Criticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). These two volumes extend from entirely different theoretical perspectives – Henderson’s collection from the inter-disciplinary field of cultural studies and Bobo’s collection from the womanist thinking of black feminist criticism – yet both incorporate ‘cultural criticism’ in their title. ‘Culture’ in the first work refers to society as a whole and ‘cultural criticism’ to the analysis of a nation’s social history; ‘culture’ in the second work, in contrast, refers chiefly to the arts and the media and ‘cultural criticism’ to the feminist critique of society through aesthetic productions.

¹⁰ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16.

the arts.’ Fourth, later in the century ... ‘a whole way of life, material, intellectual, and spiritual.’¹³

This diversification in meaning evidences the development of a British tradition of intellectual enquiry into the aspects of society that the word ‘culture’ came to signify. As Williams’s definitions of culture suggest, cultural analysis may take as its subject the arts and the reaction of a society to its artistic and intellectual productions, or it may focus on society’s ‘whole way of life,’ with reference to its social and political values, institutions and structure as well as its aesthetic outputs. These diverse strands of cultural critique are closely interlinked rather than distinct, however, as almost all cultural critics debate ‘the general state of intellectual development, in a society as a whole,’ and much cultural criticism examines aspects of culture that reflect several senses of the word ‘culture.’ While Williams does not use the term cultural criticism to describe these branches of social thinking, he does identify Matthew Arnold’s ‘important definition of Culture’ in *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-1869) as the work which ‘gives [this] tradition a single watchword and a name.’¹⁴

Culture and Society established a tradition of thinking ‘about our social, political, and economic institutions; about the purposes which these institutions are designed to embody; and about the relations to these institutions and purposes of our activities in learning, education, and the arts’ that has shaped the inter-disciplinary field of British cultural studies.¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, Woolf did not make an appearance in Williams’s version of this tradition. From 1780-1950, his cultural critics are exclusively male; the early twentieth-century writers Williams selects for commentary include D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot. Yet, in the wake of second-wave feminism, Woolf’s representation of disinterested culture and intellectual liberty as a counter to war in *Three Guineas* can now be seen as an extension of Arnold’s mid-nineteenth-century recommendation of culture as ‘the great help out of our present difficulties.’¹⁶

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 124. Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-1869), in *Culture & Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 53-211.

¹⁵ Williams, *Culture and Society*, 13.

¹⁶ Arnold, preface to *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), 190.

In *Culture and Anarchy*, the series of essays that Williams presents ‘as more influential than any other single work in this tradition,’¹⁷ Arnold framed culture as:

a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically.¹⁸

Woolf confronts precisely such stock notions and mechanically-followed habits in *Three Guineas* through dissecting the long-standing patriotic and imperialist impulses in British culture that have repeatedly resulted in her country’s engagement in war. By using the term cultural criticism, contemporary Woolf scholars signal their desire to carve a space for Woolf’s feminist analysis of Britain’s social, political, educational and economic institutions within Williams’s influential tradition of British cultural critics.

Over the past fifteen years, Woolf studies have increasingly begun to talk about cultural criticism. The term is often evoked to describe those portions of Woolf’s critical prose that do not fit comfortably into the category of literary journalism. For example, Leslie Kathleen Hankins (2000) describes Woolf’s analysis of the position of the intellectual in bourgeois, patriarchal society in *Three Guineas* as ‘cultural criticism.’¹⁹ Elena Gualtieri (2000) refers more broadly to ‘Woolf’s activity as a cultural critic, journalist, reviewer and literary historian.’²⁰ Here Gualtieri implies that cultural criticism represents a distinctive critical activity for Woolf, different from her literary criticism, book reviewing and journalism in some way, although the four roles are of course not necessarily mutually exclusive. Hankins and Gualtieri’s use of the labels ‘cultural criticism’ and ‘cultural critic’ rather than ‘feminist criticism’ and ‘feminist critic’ reflects an interesting shift in scholarly discussions of Woolf’s non-fiction over the past two decades. Up until the 1990s, as my overview of Woolf scholarship will outline, Woolf’s essays, articles and reviews received little sustained investigation in their own right. Those pieces of critical prose in which Woolf looks beyond literature to British culture, society and politics were primarily referred to as

¹⁷ Williams, *Culture and Society*, 125.

¹⁸ Arnold, preface to *Culture and Anarchy*, 190.

¹⁹ Leslie Kathleen Hankins, ‘Virginia Woolf and Walter Benjamin Selling Out(Siders),’ in *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. Pamela L. Caughie (London: Garland, 2000), 21.

²⁰ Elena Gualtieri, *Virginia Woolf’s Essays: Sketching the Past* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 15.

feminist criticism due to the feminist viewpoint of her socio-political critique. As her journalism and extended essays began to receive more critical attention, scholars began to use the term cultural criticism to indicate the breadth of Woolf's feminist social and political commentary. The persistent popular perception of Woolf in her home country as 'a simultaneously elite and frighteningly feminist Figure of English Culture,' the history of which will soon be explored, has made contemporary Woolf scholars anxious to emphasise, without diminishing her significance as a feminist thinker, that Woolf's feminist analysis pertinently addressed British society as a whole, not just the middle-class women whose historically oppressed position received the focus of her attention.²¹ Writing in 2007 Anna Snaith depicts Woolf as 'an important cultural theorist' whose own output 'anticipated many of the central ideas' of the theoretical approaches through which we now understand her work.²² Depicting Woolf's feminist analysis of society and culture as cultural criticism enables contemporary Woolf scholars to stress that Woolf's socialism, anti-nationalism and pacifism were just as important to her politics as her feminism, which many find intimidating, and to highlight Woolf's close contact with, and interest in, the wider society many presume she wished to eschew.

Despite its growing usage within Woolf scholarship, the term cultural criticism undoubtedly maintains an element of ambiguity when applied to Woolf. I retain it in this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, the term describes particularly well those journalistic writings and extended essays of 1930-1941 in which Woolf scrutinises both the arts in general and society as a whole. A precedent has already been set for describing journalistic writing on the subject of art and society from this period as cultural criticism by David Margolies in *Writing the Revolution: Cultural Criticism from Left Review*.²³ Here Margolies uses the term to suggest the *Left Review*'s focus on the relationship between aesthetics and politics and the role of art within society, a prominent strand of intellectual debate not just in this mid-1930s literary periodical but across Europe in the years leading up to World War II. Secondly, the ambiguous label of cultural criticism is flexible enough to encompass the diverse formal structures and broad intellectual scope of Woolf's multiple examinations of Britain's society and

²¹ Jane Marcus, 'Wrapped in the Stars and Stripes: Virginia Woolf in the U.S.A.,' *South Carolina Review* 29: 1 (1996): 21-22.

²² Anna Snaith, introduction to *Palgrave Advances in Woolf Studies*, 7.

²³ David Margolies, ed., *Writing the Revolution: Cultural Criticism from Left Review* (London: Pluto Press, 1998).

politics during 1930-1941, which blend together elements of literary, feminist, biographical, pacifist and socialist criticism to form a new, dissident prose genre. Woolf's cultural analysis appears not only in the journalistic articles and extended non-fictional works that Gualtieri, Hankins and Pawlowski have previously designated as cultural criticism, but also in her fiction. Her writing from this period is rarely exclusively literary or political as her feminism permeates all aspects of her artistic and socio-political viewpoint. Even when Woolf overtly presents herself as a social critic in essays of the 1930s, she seldom writes solely and explicitly on socio-political affairs, instead incorporating her feminist critique of Britain's customs, institutions and social structure within her analyses of literature, its history and the conditions of its production. By using the term cultural criticism in this thesis I situate Woolf within two distinct critical traditions: she is both a descendant of the great English public intellectuals of the nineteenth-century fashioned in the 'man-of-letters' mode, exemplified by Arnold and Woolf's father Leslie Stephen; and an antecedent of the evolution of the discipline of cultural studies. She is also, notably, part of a significant literary and historical moment as one of the many writers caught up in the debates which raged through the 1930s about the proper relation of literature to society.

Literature and History in the 1930s

The timing of Woolf's turn toward cultural criticism in the early 1930s reflects the pervasive presence of social and political commentary in much British literature of the later interwar period. In *The Auden Generation* (1976), the classic survey around which most retrospective accounts of the decade's literature are formulated, Samuel Hynes asserts that '1931 was the watershed between the post-war years and the pre-war years, the point at which the mood of the 'thirties first became generally apparent.'²⁴ Fundamentally important to this pre-war mood that Hynes identifies was the Wall Street Crash of October 1929. The financial crisis that followed this collapse of the American stock market led many European countries, still recovering from the economic cost of World War I, to experience steep rises in unemployment and widespread poverty amongst their labouring classes. Unemployment peaked in Britain in the years 1931-

²⁴ Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (London: Bodley Head, 1976), 65.

1932, described by John Stevenson and Chris Cook (1994) as ‘the trough of the depression,’ with over 2.5 million people officially registered as out of work (the actual number of jobless workers, as Stevenson and Cook note, was probably far higher).²⁵ Global economies remained in a depressed state throughout the decade until the outbreak of World War II in September 1939.

In the context of the Great Depression, and partly as a consequence of it, Europe in the 1930s became increasingly politically unstable. As Hynes observes, popular protest, civil disobedience and a growth in fascism became progressively more visible in Britain and across the continent from 1932:

Hunger marchers demonstrated in London that autumn. ... In November, Sir Oswald Mosley announced the formation of the British Union of Fascists. ... Meanwhile, across the Channel there were riots in Poland and an anarchist uprising in Barcelona; and in January 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, the Reichstag burned, and the persecution of Jews and leftists began.²⁶

Confidence in the League of Nations, the international governmental organisation set up after World War I to prevent further conflict, was gradually eroded through this period as its attempts to secure worldwide disarmament proved futile.²⁷ Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935 highlighted the ineffectuality of the League’s policy of collective security and exposed the weakness of an organisation which, with no armed force at its disposal, could only impose its authority through the actions of member states that would always be reluctant to jeopardise their own political and financial security. By July 1936, when Civil War erupted in Spain, the League of Nations had virtually collapsed. The policy of non-intervention adopted by the remnants of the League in response to the Spanish Civil War, including the British government, was criticised widely in the European media. Depicted in the British press as a war between democracy on the left, represented by the Spanish Republican government, and tyranny on the right, represented by General Franco’s Nationalist forces and the Fascist Italian and Nazi German troops that supported them, the war engaged the attention of many

²⁵ John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *Britain in the Depression: Society and Politics, 1929-1939*, 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 1994), 15.

²⁶ Hynes, *The Auden Generation*, 99.

²⁷ Leonard Woolf was heavily involved in the League of Nations at its foundation and remained a champion of the League’s ideals until its mid-1930s collapse; see Victoria Glendinning, *Leonard Woolf: A Life* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 484.

leftist British writers, artists and intellectuals, some of whom even volunteered to assist the Republican cause.²⁸ The threat of another major global conflict became ever more apparent through the period until finally, five months after the Spanish Republicans' surrender to Franco's dictatorship on 1 April 1939, Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939 marking the start of World War II.

'From about 1930, predictions of war, and anxieties about war, begin to enter English writing,' Hynes notes in *The Auden Generation*, 'and at about the same time the younger generation begins to write about itself as a generation.'²⁹ Hynes's study focuses on the development of these younger writers he defines as the 'Auden Generation,' the majority of whom were English, middle-class, university educated, and born between 1900 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Alongside the poet W. H. Auden, after whom Hynes's grouping was named, these writers also included: Irish-born poet, Cecil Day-Lewis; poet and critic, William Empson; novelist, Christopher Isherwood; poet and publisher, John Lehmann; and poet, novelist and essayist, Stephen Spender. The anxieties about war that Hynes finds in the writings of this generation entered the consciousness of all living and working through this period, however, not only the small circle of writers that Hynes reviews. More recently Richard Overy has described the 'overwhelmingly morbid character of much of the culture and ideas of the inter-war years,' contending that anxieties about war had a dramatic impact on literature produced throughout the two decades following the end of World War I.³⁰ Surveys of 1930s literature written after *The Auden Generation* have often sought to present a more balanced picture of the writing produced in the later interwar period than that which Hynes supplies.

The essays collected in *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 30s* (1979), a less well-known study edited by Jon Clark, Margot Heinemann, David Margolies and Carole Snee, examine the existence of radical and left-wing cultural outputs across the genres of poetry, fiction, critical prose, theatre and film in this turbulent decade.³¹ Jon Clark's

²⁸ On the active involvement of writers in politics during the 1930s see Rob Mengham, 'The Thirties: Politics, Authority, Perspective,' in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 359-378.

²⁹ Hynes, *The Auden Generation*, 61 (emphasis in original).

³⁰ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Penguin, 2009), 364.

³¹ Jon Clark, Margot Heinemann, David Margolies and Carole Snee, eds., *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 30s* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979).

essay considers the unprecedented amount of ‘Left’ theatre groups performing plays and sketches to labour movement audiences in Britain in the 1930s, focussing on the founding and development of the socialist Unity Theatre in London in 1936.³² Peter Widdowson’s contribution places already established novelists, Aldous Huxley and Woolf, alongside younger writers, such as Isherwood, Edward Upward and Graham Greene, in an attempt to undermine the ‘tacit – and sometimes express – judgement that the 1930s was a fallow decade so far as the novel in England is concerned.’³³ All the essays’ authors ‘share the view that the culture of the thirties gained in strength and vitality by confronting instead of attempting to evade the profound economic and political crisis of those years.’³⁴ As a whole, the editors state, the collection seeks to defend the decade’s literature, without wishing ‘to romanticize the period or to minimize and patronize its achievements, as so many recent commentaries have done.’³⁵ *Culture and Crisis in Britain*, like most later retrospective studies of the period, is situated in opposition to the post-war portrayal of the 1930s as a decade in which political literature flourished at the expense of aesthetic literature, which remained ‘simplistic, unimaginative, and crudely propagandist.’³⁶

In *British Writers of the Thirties* (1988), Valentine Cunningham emphasises the continued presence of ‘the heroes and heroines of British Modernism’ through the decade who were ‘still about in large numbers and still producing.’³⁷ The 1930s ‘contain at least three literary generations,’ Cunningham asserts, of which ‘Auden and his coterie may be justly thought of as somewhere in the middle’ with ‘a most distinguished older generation’ on one side – including T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, E. M. Forster, Wyndham Lewis, W. B. Yeats and Woolf – and ‘the immediate inheritors of the Auden generation ... the younger brothers’ younger brothers’ on the other.³⁸ In this latter grouping Cunningham includes John Cornford, a Cambridge-educated Communist and poet who was killed while fighting for the Spanish Republicans in 1936, and

³² Jon Clark, ‘Agitprop and Unity Theatre: Socialist Theatre in the Thirties,’ in *Culture and Crisis*, 219-239.

³³ Peter Widdowson, ‘Between the Acts? English Fiction in the Thirties,’ in *Culture and Crisis*, 133.

³⁴ Clark, Heinemann, Margolies and Snee, introduction to *Culture and Crisis*, 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷ Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

Charles Madge, poet, sociologist, and one of the founders of Mass-Observation.³⁹ Established in 1937, this mass social research organisation aimed ‘to create an “anthropology of ourselves”’ through recruiting a team of observers and volunteer writers to study ‘the everyday lives of ordinary people in Britain.’⁴⁰ Cunningham’s expansive discussion of the vast diversity of British writers working in the 1930s forcefully demonstrates why ‘concentrating only on the Auden clique won’t do.’⁴¹

Literary histories of the 1930s that stress the importance of the Auden generation risk suggesting that this small group of poets were the foremost and only writers of leftist literature in the period. The decade also contained a significant strand of socially-engaged ‘documentary’ literature, evidenced primarily in the era’s prose, to which the Mass-Observation project corresponds. George Orwell’s *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), a fictionalised memoir of Orwell’s encounters with poverty while living in each of these cities, exemplifies this trend. Orwell’s emphasis on personal witness in this novel and his blurring of the boundaries between creative writing and reportage exhibits the documentary qualities that characterised much politicised literature of the 1930s. *Down and Out* reads in parts as a novel, with imaginative descriptions of the narrator’s environment and the characters he meets, and in parts as a journalistic report, with prosaic interludes on social matters such as: ‘A word about the sleeping accommodation open to a homeless person in London.’⁴² Orwell’s narrator closes his account with ‘one or two things I have definitely learned by being hard up,’ which aims to educate the reader.⁴³ This work, together with J. B. Priestley’s *English Journey* (1934), marked the beginning of a fashion for socially and politically engaged travel-writing from middle-class writers in Britain in the 1930s. The lengthy subtitle of Priestley’s non-fictional, politicised travelogue – *a rambling but truthful account of what one man saw and heard and felt and thought during a journey through England during the autumn of the year 1933* – signifies the accent placed on personal experience and accurate testimony in such socialist works.⁴⁴ When Orwell

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁰ ‘The Original Mass Observation,’ in *Mass Observation Archive* [Web site] (University of Sussex); available from <http://www.massobs.org.uk/original_massobservation_project.htm>; accessed 5 November 2009.

⁴¹ Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 26.

⁴² George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (London: Penguin, 1999), 210.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

⁴⁴ J. B. Priestley, *English Journey* (London: Folio Society, 1997).

came to write *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), a non-fictional study of the acute unemployment and financial hardship affecting Northern England's labouring classes, he similarly abandoned the fictional devices of *Down and Out* to adopt a style Keith Williams describes as the 'new reportage'.⁴⁵ The prose produced by Orwell, Priestley and their contemporaries was as crucial to establishing the leftist tone of 1930s literature as the poetry and fiction of the writers retrospectively grouped as the Auden generation.

A further reason for broadening our view of the 1930s, Cunningham contends, is because 'the myth of the Auden Generation, in choosing by and large to leave out novelists ... even if it does let in Isherwood and Upward and a tiny clutch of other prose writers, is clamantly leaving out women.'⁴⁶ Elizabeth Bowen, Winifred Holtby, Storm Jameson, Rosamond Lehmann, Jean Rhys, Dorothy Richardson, Stevie Smith and Woolf, Cunningham reminds us, were all producing fiction in this decade. Janet Montefiore argues (1996), however, with some justification, that despite the greater inclusivity of Cunningham's 'monumental *British Writers of the Thirties*,' his review of the decade equally 'has little to say about women writers except for Elizabeth Bowen.'⁴⁷ In *Men and Women Writers of the 1930s*, Montefiore attempts to address this deficiency in Cunningham's work by examining the work of female and working-class male writers of the decade, whose political stance she reads as infused with a sense of collective memory.⁴⁸ Cunningham's assertion that '[t]here weren't many notable woman poets in Britain in the 1930s' is further challenged by Jane Dowson's critical anthology of 1930s poetry by women, which seeks to restore the previously eclipsed verse of writers such as Frances Cornford, Naomi Mitchison and Dorothy Wellesley to this decade's literary canon.⁴⁹ Essays collected in *Women Writers of the 1930s* (1999), edited by Maroula Joannou, similarly emphasise the vast array of poetry and prose

⁴⁵ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Gollancz, 1937). See Keith Williams, 'Post/Modern Documentary: Orwell, Agee and the New Reportage,' in *Rewriting the Thirties: Modernism and After*, ed. Keith Williams and Steven Matthews (London: Longman, 1997), 163-181.

⁴⁶ Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 26.

⁴⁷ Janet Montefiore, *Men and Women Writers of the 1930s: The Dangerous Flood of History* (London: Routledge, 1996), 19-20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁹ Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 26. Jane Dowson, ed., *Women's Poetry of the 1930s: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

produced by women writers working in this decade.⁵⁰ These studies have done much to reinstate women's writing within the wider narrative of 1930s literature in Britain.

Rewriting the Thirties: Modernism and After (1997), an essay collection edited by Keith Williams and Steven Matthews, supports and extends Cunningham's depiction of the sustained influence of the 1920s experimentalists in the decade preceding World War II.⁵¹ This volume attempts to 'challenge the persistent aftermyth of the thirties as a homogenous anti-modernist decade' by showing the 'over-lapping, competing and contradictory theoretical tendencies and practical alignments in the decade,' and by emphasising the role of Eliot at Faber and Woolf at Hogarth as 'literary midwives to the younger writers of the thirties.'⁵² Throughout the 1930s Woolf and her husband, Leonard, supported writers of Auden's generation by publishing their work through the Woolfs' own Hogarth Press. The year of Woolf's fiftieth birthday, 1932, saw the publication of *New Signatures*, a landmark volume of verse from the new generation of young poets which, as Hynes notes, 'has become a part of the 'thirties mythology' surrounding Auden and his contemporaries.'⁵³ This collection was proposed to the Woolfs by John Lehmann, then assistant manager at the Press. Despite her conflicted responses to these younger writers and her distrust of their militant political outlook (to be discussed in Chapter 4), Woolf strongly believed that their output should be printed and debated.

While Cunningham's monograph and Williams and Matthews's edited collection successfully broadened the study of 1930s literature by reminding readers of the productivity of Woolf and her modernist contemporaries in this decade, their continued stress upon the divide between the two literary generations inadvertently perpetuates the myth of the younger writers of the 1930s as anti-modernist and the older writers of the 1930s as anti-political in their output. Works such as John Lucas's *The Radical Twenties* (1997), which traces the social and political radicalism of modernist writers, and David Ayers's *English Literature of the 1920s* (1999), which reads 1920s

⁵⁰ Maroula Joannou, ed., *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

⁵¹ Keith Williams and Steven Matthews, eds., *Rewriting the Thirties: Modernism and After* (London: Longman, 1997).

⁵² Williams and Matthews, introduction to *Rewriting the Thirties*, 1-2.

⁵³ Hynes, *The Auden Generation*, 75. See Michael Roberts, ed., *New Signatures: Poems by Several Hands* (London: Hogarth, 1932).

modernist fiction as a reaction against ‘the emergence of the modern capitalist state,’ undermine such divisions by constructing a pre-history for the activist 1930s within the modernist 1920s.⁵⁴ This thesis builds on the work of critics such as Lucas and Ayers, and recent scholarly study of modernism’s survival and growth in the 1930s (to be discussed in my conclusion), further calling into question the integrity of viewing the interwar period in two distinct decades by arguing that Woolf’s writing in the 1930s was both politically activist and stylistically modernist. Woolf’s development as an experimental cultural critic, radical in her feminist-pacifist politics and in her use of critical and fictional literary forms, suggests a bridge between two decades and two generations often artificially divided in scholarly discussions of the interwar period.

Woolf in the 1930s and After

At the end of the 1920s, Woolf’s literary reputation was at its peak. The last five years had been her most productive both as a writer of fiction and of non-fiction. Following the minor successes of her early novels, *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), and her first novel-length work of experimental fiction, *Jacob’s Room* (1922), the publication of *Mrs Dalloway* in 1925 signalled Woolf’s arrival as a major contemporary novelist. Reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS), *New Statesman* and *Calendar of Modern Letters* praised the novel’s innovation even as they queried its difficulty.⁵⁵ Surveying Woolf’s fiction for the *New Criterion* in April 1926, E. M. Forster declared *Mrs Dalloway* ‘perhaps her masterpiece.’⁵⁶ The publication of *To the Lighthouse* (1927) guaranteed Woolf’s reputation as a highbrow experimentalist, while her highly successful fictional ‘biography’ *Orlando* (1928) popularised her playful blending and breaking of literary forms for a wider reading public.⁵⁷ Woolf’s profile as a literary and feminist critic also climbed steadily through 1925-1930 with the

⁵⁴ David Ayers, *English Literature of the 1920s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 2; John Lucas, *The Radical Twenties: Aspects of Writing, Politics and Culture* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 1997).

⁵⁵ ‘A Novelist’s Experiment,’ *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 May 1925; P. C. Kennedy, Review of *Mrs Dalloway*, *New Statesman*, 6 June 1925; J. F. Holms, Review of *Mrs Dalloway*, *Calendar of Modern Letters*, July 1925; all quoted in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin (London: Routledge, 1975), 160-171.

⁵⁶ E. M. Forster, ‘The Novels of Virginia Woolf,’ *New Criterion*, April 1926; quoted in *Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, 174.

⁵⁷ Sandra M. Gilbert notes that *Orlando*’s ‘post-publication sales were the strongest Woolf had ever had’ in her introduction to *O*, xxxiv.

publication of *The Common Reader* (1925), her first collected volume of critical essays, and *A Room of One's Own* (1929), an extended critical discussion of the social and economic circumstances necessary for women to succeed as writers of fiction and across the professions. Although a prolific book-reviewer and journalist since the publication of her first literary article in 1904, most of Woolf's literary and cultural criticism had previously appeared unsigned in the pages of the *TLS*.⁵⁸ *The Common Reader* alerted readers beyond London's literary elite to Woolf's output and abilities as a writer of critical prose. As her fame grew Woolf's marketability also increased, leading to frequent requests for signed articles from high profile, high-paying British and American periodicals in the late 1920s.

Heading into the 1930s Woolf was publically perceived by many as a glamorous but elusive aesthete; she was crowned 'The Queen of High-Brows' by Arnold Bennett in the *Evening Standard* on 28 November 1929.⁵⁹ Bennett's depiction of Woolf was reinforced by the release of *The Waves* in September 1931, Woolf's first major publication of the 1930s. This highly experimental novel represented Woolf's most thorough exposition of the multiplicity and communality of the modern self and the fullest expression of the innovative fictional method that she had already demonstrated in the early short stories 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917) and 'Kew Gardens' (1919), and in the novels *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*.⁶⁰ The poetic qualities of Woolf's prose were celebrated in contemporary reviews of *The Waves* but many critics doubted whether Woolf could push this method further. Peter Burra (1934) described the work as 'the limit of her development ... [in which] her earlier experiments are carried to their logical conclusion'; R. D. Charques declared that 'No other contemporary novelist is so far removed from trivial or worldly things, so

⁵⁸ Woolf's first journalistic commission, a review of *The Son of Royal Langbrith*, by W. D. Howells, appeared in the *Churchwoman* pages of the Anglo-Catholic *Guardian* on 14 December 1904 (no relation to the modern-day British broadsheet). Woolf, then Virginia Stephen, began writing for Bruce Richmond's *Times Literary Supplement* in 1905; her first contribution was 'Literary Geography,' a review of two volumes from the Pilgrimage Series of literary travel journals published on 10 March 1905. For Woolf's "'The Son of Royal Langbrith'" and 'Literary Geography' see *E* 1, 3-5, 32-36.

⁵⁹ Arnold Bennett, 'Queen of the High-Brows,' *Evening Standard*, 28 November 1929; quoted in *Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, 258-260.

⁶⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'The Mark on the Wall,' in *HH*, 77-83; Virginia Woolf, 'Kew Gardens,' in *HH*, 84-89.

delicately poised above the common earth of fiction.’⁶¹ At the close of the first book-length study of Woolf, published in 1932, Winifred Holtby turned from *The Waves* to prophesy that Woolf’s ‘range will remain limited, her contact with life delicate and profound rather than comprehensive ... [and] she is unlikely ever to command the allegiance of a wide contemporary public.’⁶² Even to those who celebrated them, Woolf’s aesthetic investigations into the human ego were beginning to seem not only esoteric but out of place in the current troubled economic and political climate.

The publication of *Flush* in October 1933, a frivolous pseudo-biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel, was read as further evidence by the critical establishment that Woolf was out of touch with the society into which she wrote and that her fiction had already passed its peak. Writing in the *English Review* Eleanor Carroll Chilton called the book ‘a very charming trifle’ but ‘[could] not help looking at it suspiciously’; “Orlando,” “The Waves,” and “Flush,” in chronological order,’ Chilton asserted, ‘seem to indicate that Mrs. Woolf is growing less and less interested in using her method as a means of exploring reality, and more and more absorbed in trying to create reality out of the method itself.’⁶³ Despite such criticism, or perhaps because of it, *Flush* sold surprisingly well (Julia Briggs observes the sale of ‘18,000 copies in its first six months in the UK alone’⁶⁴), proving to be far more accessible to the middlebrow reading public than her novels had been and confirming Woolf’s pre-publication fear that her readers would ‘say its [*sic*] “charming” delicate, ladylike [...] [a]nd I shall very much dislike the popular success of *Flush*.’⁶⁵ Later critics have read surreptitious elements of social critique in the work that contemporary readers largely overlooked. In her introduction to *Flush* Kate Flint notes that by ‘parodying ... Lytton Strachey’s extravagant debunking of Victorian hypocrisy in *Eminent Victorians*,’ Woolf was also ‘tacitly restating ... some of the reasons why the Victorian period, with its legacy of gender attitudes persisting into the present day, still deserved serious scrutiny.’⁶⁶

⁶¹ Peter Burra, Review-article, *Nineteenth Century*, January 1934; R. D. Charques, *Contemporary Literature and Social Revolution* (London: Martin Secker, 1933); both quoted in *Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, 320, 343.

⁶² Winifred Holtby, *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Memoir* (Chicago: Cassandra Editions, 1978), 201.

⁶³ Eleanor Carroll Chilton, ‘Small Fry,’ *English Review*, November 1933, 557.

⁶⁴ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, 300.

⁶⁵ D 4: 181. Due to her frequent use of ellipses, throughout this thesis I identify my ellipses with square brackets within quotations from Woolf. All ellipses within quotations from other writers are my own.

⁶⁶ Kate Flint, introduction to *Flush*, ed. Kate Flint (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xvi.

Nevertheless when viewed alongside the overtly socially and politically engaged writings of younger writers of the period, the book appeared flimsy, individualistic, and entirely disinterested in current affairs.

Woolf's reputation was helped little in the 1930s by her critical writing; her activity as a literary journalist fell dramatically through the decade. *The Times* and the *TLS*, which had previously received the majority of Woolf's literary journalism, printed only nine essays by Woolf in the years 1931-1941. Although she continued to write for a wide range of publications in this late period, including the popular women's magazine, *Good Housekeeping*, the scholarly *Yale Review*, and the Communist Party of Great Britain's *Daily Worker*, in all Woolf produced only fifty journalistic articles in the ten years preceding her death, less than half of the 117 essays and reviews she had produced during the years 1925-1930. The rich language and conversational style of her published journalism frequently concealed her social and political commentary and facilitated the reception of her prose as impressionistic rather than analytical. In *Men Without Art* (1934), Wyndham Lewis implicitly affirmed that her writing was of diminishing relevance to contemporary society by beginning his chapter on Woolf with an acknowledgement that 'certain critics will instantly object that Mrs. Woolf is extremely insignificant—that she is a purely feminist phenomenon—that she is taken seriously by no one any longer today.'⁶⁷ 'I am ready to agree that the intrinsic literary importance of Mrs. Woolf may be exaggerated by her friends,' Lewis continued, but 'as a symbolic landmark—a sort of party-lighthouse—she has ... a very real significance ... [for] she has crystallized for us, in her critical essays, what is in fact *the feminine*—as distinguished from the feminist—standpoint.'⁶⁸ Lewis's emphasis on what he obscurely refers to as the 'feminine' in Woolf's critical prose relates to his representation of her writing as an oddity, a beacon of the now outdated feminized highbrow culture of Bloomsbury. He notably attaches no importance to Woolf's analysis of women's historically oppressed position in society, either in *A Room of One's Own* or in her critical writings at large, asserting instead that 'feminism is a dead issue.'⁶⁹ The title of Woolf's second volume of critical essays, *The Common Reader: Second Series* (1932), had added to the perception of her critical outlook as outdated by stressing the work's

⁶⁷ Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art* (London: Cassell & Co., 1934), 159.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 159-160 (emphasis in original).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

connection with her earlier collection. Woolf's assertion that literature should avoid overt political commentary in *A Letter to a Young Poet* (1932) and *The Leaning Tower* (1940), two essay pamphlets written in response to the leftist poetry of Auden and his contemporaries, further served to propagate the caricature of Woolf as a fading experimental novelist whose intellectual position had been rendered obsolete by the movement of her times.

In fact Woolf was desperately interested in documenting and examining the movement of her times throughout the 1930s. From 1931, she kept scrapbooks of quotations, newspaper cuttings and articles relating to British and European politics, the rise of Fascism, and the position of women and militarism in British society, as part of her research for *The Pargiters*. This unfinished hybrid 'novel-essay' was conceived as 'a sequel to a Room of Ones [sic] Own' on 20 January 1931 (a day before Woolf delivered her speech on 'Professions for Women' to the Junior Council of the London and National Society for Women's Service and eighteen days before completing *The Waves*).⁷⁰ The project occupied much of Woolf's attention through the mid-1930s, as she repeatedly redrafted, revised and finally reworked the enterprise into two separate texts; her socially attentive novel, *The Years* (1937), and her overtly confrontational feminist-pacifist pamphlet, *Three Guineas*. From a retrospective viewpoint, the early months of 1931 appear pivotal within the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism for it was at this moment that she began to channel her experimentalism, literary activity and intellectual focus into the 'entire new book' on 'the sexual life of women' that would morph into her two major works of the 1930s.⁷¹ Chapters 2-4 of this thesis will focus on the evolution of Woolf's cultural criticism during and after this moment.

When *The Years* appeared in March 1937, however, the feminist beginnings of the endeavour were significantly suppressed in line with Woolf's concern that aesthetic productions should avoid propagandising. Howard Spring, reviewing *The Years* for the *Evening Standard* on 18 March 1937, interpreted the novel's oblique portrayal of political events as a sign of its admirable disinterest in historical and political affairs:

You may judge the author's sense of what is important, of what really matters to the ordinary man and woman, from this: the Jubilee is not mentioned, the Boer

⁷⁰ D 4: 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

War is not mentioned, the Suffragette movement is satisfactorily dealt with by a casual remark about a woman being in gaol for having thrown a stone through a window.⁷²

The novel's implicit socio-feminist position was thus obscured and the book was appreciatively received by many as an uncomplicated, realist family chronicle novel, becoming a best-seller in America.⁷³ *The Years* retains many of the modernist fictional techniques of her earlier novels – shifting narrative perspective, internal resonances and private symbolism – but to the critical establishment the book represented a backwards step from her earlier fiction.

The second portion of Woolf's *Pargiters* project, *Three Guineas*, was published in June 1938. In contrast to *The Years*, this prose pamphlet explicitly set out the feminist-pacifist position Woolf had developed through the 1930s in a manner which some critics found too direct. Reviewing the work for the *Spectator* on 17 June 1938, Graham Greene imagined Woolf's brain as 'a large whorled shell,' finding in *Three Guineas* that:

When Mrs Woolf's argument touches morality or religion we are aware of odd sounds in the shell. Can a shell be a little old-fashioned ... a little provincial, even a little shrill? Can a shell be said to lead a too sheltered life?⁷⁴

His reference to the essay's shrillness discloses his discomfort with its outspoken style and unequivocally political commentary, which he finds inappropriate from a writer he imagines to be stuck in the provincial, upper-middle-class world of Edwardian fiction. 'There is a mythical quality about Mrs Woolf,' Greene asserts: 'It is sometimes hard not to believe that she is a character invented by Mr. E. M. Forster.'⁷⁵

Such responses to *Three Guineas* were anticipated by Woolf, who expected the book to meet resistance from the male middle classes whose education, militarism and materialism her work so ruthlessly attacked. Theodora Bosanquet recognised these

⁷² Howard Spring, Review of *The Years*, *Evening Standard*, 18 March 1937; quoted in Woolf: *The Critical Heritage*, 377.

⁷³ After the release of 10,000 copies of the first American edition of *The Years* in April 1937, there were twelve re-impressions totalling 37,900 copies between April and October 1937; see B. J. Kirkpatrick and Stuart N. Clarke, *A Bibliography of Virginia Woolf*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 100.

⁷⁴ Graham Greene, Review of *Three Guineas*, *Spectator*, 17 June 1938; quoted in Woolf: *The Critical Heritage*, 406-408.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 406.

radical elements of the prose work, describing it in *Time and Tide*, a literary weekly edited by the feminist Viscountess Rhondda, as ‘a revolutionary bomb of a book, delicately aimed at the heart of our mad, armament ridden world.’⁷⁶ An anonymous article in the *Saturday Review* conceded, however, that ‘even the mere male must forgive this devastating attack on his entrenched position, if he contemplates it without prejudice’ since ‘[*Three Guineas*] reveals Mrs. Woolf as a most entertainingly satirical Peace pamphleteer.’⁷⁷ In the *TLS*, Woolf’s argument against war was politely praised and the book declared ‘a pamphlet which, in various ways, challenges every thinking mind to-day,’ but the anonymous reviewer finally concluded, in line with Greene, ‘it might be said that Mrs Woolf cannot solve the whole problem if she only states it for educated women of a civilized *bourgeoisie*.’⁷⁸

Unlike Orwell or Priestley, who, although of lower social standing were each university educated and, in differing ways, also middle class, Woolf did not attempt to traverse the gulf between the classes. Her determination to write only on behalf of that portion of British society that she knew personally in *Three Guineas*, the daughters of educated men, both reflects the strong emphasis on personal testimony in much documentary literature of the decade and revolts against the assumption that a middle-class writer can speak with authority on the problems affecting the labouring classes. Her reluctance to analyse British society beyond the sphere of the upper-middle classes no doubt contributed to the perception of her feminist analysis of militarism as limited, as did the ever increasing threat of war against which, in June 1938, Woolf’s thoughts on peace could provide no practical defence.

As World War II began in September 1939 Woolf was occupied with two book-length projects: *Roger Fry*, a biography of her close friend the Bloomsbury art critic who had died in September 1934; and a new novel, *Between the Acts*. Woolf had been working on the projects in tandem since 1938: the biography was published in July 1940; *Between the Acts* was published in July 1941, six months after Woolf’s death. *Between the Acts* had been the focus of Woolf’s attention since the publication of *Three*

⁷⁶ Theodora Bosanquet, Review of *Three Guineas*, *Time and Tide*, 4 June 1938; quoted in *Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, 402.

⁷⁷ ‘Women and War,’ Review of *Three Guineas*, by Virginia Woolf, *Saturday Review*, 11 June 1938, 374.

⁷⁸ Review of *Three Guineas*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 June 1938 (emphasis in original); quoted in *Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, 400-401.

Guineas. Begun and set in pre-war Britain, it is a novel for a country facing conflict. Echoing the form of *Mrs Dalloway*, a distinctly post-war novel set on one day in June 1923, *Between the Acts* depicts the experiences of an interlinked cast of characters through one day in mid-June 1939. *Mrs Dalloway*, an urban novel, climaxes in a London society party; the focus of the action in *Between the Acts* is a provincial village pageant. Images of violence and the sounds of aerial attack powerfully reverberate through the text, echoing Septimus Warren Smith's hallucinations of war in *Mrs Dalloway*. Despite the pre-war setting, these images highlight the international conflict that will soon erupt and splinter the sheltered English community the novel portrays. *Between the Acts* is 'preoccupied with communal survival,' as Gillian Beer observes, yet the society it depicts is not presented as a patriotic ideal, but 'typifies the attitudes that have brought the country to the brink of war and of fascism.'⁷⁹

The social and political implications of *Between the Acts* eluded many of the novel's first critics as Woolf's suicide in January 1941 and the subsequent revelation of her life-long mental illness prompted readers of her writing to align her supposed 'madness' with eccentric genius, overlooking Woolf's subversive attempts to analyse the prevailing greed, complacency and underlying aggression of the predominant patriarchal social order and further emphasising her aloofness and difficulty. Respectful obituaries celebrated Woolf's life and works through emphasising her remoteness from everyday society: Stephen Spender described Woolf as 'an extraordinary and poetic and beautiful human being'; Hugh Walpole portrayed her as 'a lady' in the Victorian mould with 'the air of a priestess.'⁸⁰ Despite Woolf's various efforts to speak to society at large in her criticism and fiction of the 1930s and after – from her introductory essay to *Life As We Have Known It*, a volume of autobiographical writings from the working women of the Women's Co-operative Guild published in 1931, through to 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,' a short treatise directed to American women on the necessity of

⁷⁹ Gillian Beer, 'Between the Acts: Resisting the End,' in *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 129-130.

⁸⁰ Stephen Spender in the *Listener*, 10 April 1941; Hugh Walpole in the *New Statesman and Nation*, 14 June 1941; both quoted in *Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, 428, 433.

promoting peace published in *New Republic* in October 1940 – at her death she was primarily remembered as an isolated aesthete.⁸¹

Scholarly Discussion of Woolf as a Social and Political Thinker

Three interlinked branches of Woolf scholarship have been fundamental to establishing the now prevalent image of Woolf as a social and political thinker in the final decade of her life: feminist criticism, new historicism, and textual studies. Each of these branches of scholarship have encouraged Woolf's reception as a cultural critic through supplying diverse historical, social and political interpretations of her writings, and through the interest they promote in her non-fictional and pre-publication texts. Although Woolf's oeuvre has been the subject of countless critical studies in the sixty-nine years since her death, her literary and cultural journalism has consistently received less attention than her novels. These writings, like Woolf's manuscript drafts, are crucial to the contemporary portrayal of Woolf in recent criticism as a politically-engaged, public social and cultural commentator. The following review of Woolf studies will focus on tracing the emergence of feminist, new-historicist, and textual scholarship threads within the field, the recovery of Woolf's non-fictional and manuscript writings, and the impact that these new critical approaches and source texts have had on scholarly readings of her later output.

The first posthumous critical readings of Woolf in Britain tended to propagate the perception that she was a highly-privileged aesthete with little or no awareness of politics and only a partial knowledge of society beyond her own upper-middle-class upbringing. Writing in 1942, David Daiches deduced from the prevalence of 'persons of unusual culture' in Woolf's novels that 'it never seems to have occurred to her that the vast majority of the population of Britain had not enjoyed the classics and could not read a foreign language.'⁸² With the exception of *Three Guineas*, Daiches argued, 'Virginia Woolf remained on the whole outside politics, content to justify her position

⁸¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Introductory Letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies,' *Life As We Have Known It: By Co-operative Working Women*, ed. Margaret Llewelyn Davies (London: Virago, 1990), xvii-xxxxi; Virginia Woolf, 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,' in *CE* 4, 173-177.

⁸² David Daiches, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Poetry London, 1945), 10.

implicitly and unanswerably by her creative work.⁸³ Overall, his study neglected Woolf's non-fictional writings, choosing instead to discuss her fiction. Joan Bennett's *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist* (1945) contrastingly included a chapter on 'Virginia Woolf as Critic,' but this discussion focussed on Woolf's literary essays with only a cursory reference to her feminism, which, Bennett asserted, 'led to some rhetorical excesses in *Three Guineas*.'⁸⁴

Early assessments of Woolf from continental Europe and America, although generally more favourable than those produced in her own country, likewise sidelined Woolf's critical output in the main. In his classic survey of European fiction, *Mimesis*, the German critic Erich Auerbach (1946) influentially discussed the experimental depiction of internalised emotion and thought in *To the Lighthouse*.⁸⁵ American scholars Harvena Richter (1970), James Naremore (1973) and Alice van Buren Kelley (1973) expanded Auerbach's attentive reading of Woolf's fictional portrayals of interiority with three book-length studies on Woolf's negotiation between the outer and inner life of the self which almost entirely excluded her criticism.⁸⁶ This focus on the novels did little to promote an understanding of Woolf's feminist politics. Writing in 1962, however, the French professor Jean Guiguet recognised the tendency of Woolf critics 'to relegate her essays to second place.'⁸⁷ His monograph, *Virginia Woolf and her Works*, dedicated a chapter to Woolf's critical activity as a literary essayist and feminist pamphleteer, arguing that while '*Three Guineas* can add nothing to Virginia Woolf's literary fame,' this text 'reveals a human being ... [with] a considerable degree of social consciousness.'⁸⁸ Guiguet's suggestion that *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own* 'deserve' attention 'if only to prepare us better to discover certain trends in the rest of her work' is ambiguous; it is unclear exactly what 'trends' or which 'contemporary ... social and political problems' he imagines these essays might enable

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁸⁴ Joan Bennett, *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 169.

⁸⁵ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

⁸⁶ Harvena Richter, *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); James Naremore, *Virginia Woolf and the Novel: The World Without a Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Alice van Buren Kelley, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

⁸⁷ Jean Guiguet, *Virginia Woolf and her Works*, trans. Jean Stewart (London: Hogarth, 1965), 124.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 192.

us to perceive within Woolf's wider oeuvre.⁸⁹ Yet his attention to Woolf's critical prose, and this early allusion to a hidden, muted social consciousness in her writing, significantly anticipates the feminist discovery of Woolf as a social and political thinker in the 1970s.⁹⁰

With the rise of feminist theory in the 1970s Woolf's criticism of society and culture finally became the subject of scholarly analysis. Prior to this decade, the socio-political connotations of Woolf's commentary on what Daiches termed 'the position of her own sex' had remained little explored.⁹¹ As second-wave feminists began to re-conceive feminism as a meaningful political stance, Woolf's discussion of women's role within society in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* came under scrutiny and began to be understood as one aspect of a broader political position instead of being dismissed as an outdated individualistic complaint. Woolf's assertion that a new literary tradition was needed for women writers, one that would allow women to write 'as women write, not as men write,' sparked debate from feminist critics on both sides of the Atlantic, drawing on two distinct strands of evolving feminist theory.⁹²

In America, Elaine Showalter presented *A Room of One's Own* as a blueprint for the new generation of feminist literary critics now reading and recovering a history for women's writing.⁹³ Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, a seminal text of 1970s gynocriticism, heavily criticised Woolf's analysis of women's literature and rejected her suggestion that the ideal writer should be androgynous in outlook. Yet, by subverting the title of Woolf's feminist polemic to name her own, Showalter simultaneously endowed Woolf's text with significance as a founding document of feminist literary studies. Despite such negative responses to Woolf's feminist stance in Britain and America in the late 1970s and early 1980s, collectively the increased critical attention her writing began to receive in this era led to a sustained re-evaluation of the central concerns of Woolf's critical and fictional writings. In 1981 Jane Marcus, one of the American critics at the vanguard of the feminist reappraisal of Woolf, argued that

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Another significant precursor to the 1970s critical recovery of Woolf's essays is Mark Goldman's 'Virginia Woolf and the Critic as Reader,' *PMLA* 80: 3 (1965): 275-284. Here Goldman presents Woolf as 'a serious critic' in her *Common Reader* volumes but omits to consider her cultural criticism (275).

⁹¹ Daiches, *Virginia Woolf*, 134.

⁹² *AROO*, 97.

⁹³ Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing*, 2d ed. (London: Virago, 1999).

Woolf's attempts to trace a history of women's shared experience through her critical prose should be recognised as 'an active political effort of committed socialist feminism.'⁹⁴ Marcus drew attention to 'the social criticism, the sexual politics, of Woolf's novels,' an element of her fiction which had previously been largely overlooked.⁹⁵ The increased interest in Woolf's critical writings that second-wave feminism engendered was vital to awakening contemporary awareness of her social thinking and led to dramatic reassessments of Woolf's entire oeuvre.

Meanwhile, in France, a number of post-structuralist feminist theorists were interrogating the gendered connotations of language for the woman writer and debating the possibility of feminine writing (*écriture féminine*), a version of feminist theory that became known as 'French feminism.'⁹⁶ In 1974 Julia Kristeva evoked Woolf's fictional descriptions of 'suspended states, subtle sensations and, above all, colors' to support her portrayal of woman writers as 'visionaries,' estranged from the patriarchal construction of language, which appears to them as if 'seen from a foreign land.'⁹⁷ Anglo-American feminist literary critics of the late 1970s and 1980s, while maintaining their focus on the social and economic circumstances of women writers and readers, were nevertheless much influenced by French feminism's conception of language as 'the site both of challenge and Otherness.'⁹⁸ In the 1980s, a number of critics drew on this concept to read Woolf's experimental aesthetics as politically charged. Toril Moi (1985) suggested a Kristevan view of Woolf would recognise her 'refusal to commit herself in her essays to a so-called rational or logical form of writing,' and her attempts to use language to transform 'the symbolic order of orthodox society from the inside.'⁹⁹ 'Far from a being a flight from social commitment into an arcane modernism,' Makiko Minow-Pinkney

⁹⁴ Jane Marcus, introduction to *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Macmillan, 1981), xiv.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Jane Gallop describes the formation of 'French feminism' as a movement in the United States in the late 1970s, when American critics began to use the phrase to refer to 'a narrow sector of feminist activity in France, a sector ... perceived as peculiarly French'; see Gallop, *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 41. On *écriture féminine* see Hélène Cixous's classic treatise, 'The Laugh of Medusa' (1975), trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, collected in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, 2d ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 344-349.

⁹⁷ Julia Kristeva, 'Oscillation between Power and Denial,' trans. Marilyn A. August, in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Mark and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 166.

⁹⁸ Mary Jacobus, 'The Difference of View,' in *Women Writing and Writing About Women*, ed. Mary Jacobus (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 12.

⁹⁹ Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995), 11.

(1987) argued with reference to Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, ‘Woolf’s experimental novels can ... best be seen as a feminist subversion of the deepest formal principles—of the very definitions of narrative, writing, the subject—of a patriarchal social order.’¹⁰⁰ Many Woolf critics were more distrustful of this concept of feminine writing, particularly following Judith Butler’s persuasive framing of gender as performance in *Gender Trouble* (1990), yet French feminism has had a lasting impact on Woolf studies through increasing critical awareness of the ways in which Woolf’s formal experimentalism can be read as indicative of her feminist politics.¹⁰¹

Equally important to the feminist recovery of Woolf as a political thinker and writer in the late 1970s and 1980s was the serial publication of Woolf’s letters and diaries. This vast resource of private writings drew critical attention to the historical, cultural and intellectual context in which Woolf was writing. Leonard Woolf had previously released extracts from Woolf’s expansive journals as *A Writer’s Diary* (1953), but this volume had been highly selective and concentrated only on her literary reflections.¹⁰² The systematic release of Woolf’s adult diaries in five volumes, spanning the period 1915-1941, and her letters in six volumes, from 1888-1941, supplied critics of Woolf with unprecedented access into the private and public life of their subject.¹⁰³ These volumes, published between 1975 and 1984, revealed the political opinions, personal concerns and external influences that directed Woolf’s thinking, the intellectual processes which shaped her output and, crucially, Woolf’s committed and sustained interest in the position of women within Britain’s intensely patriarchal society. The publication of Brenda R. Silver’s *Virginia Woolf’s Reading Notebooks* in 1983 exposed the breadth and diversity of Woolf’s reading, further highlighting her curiosity about women’s lives and cultural history, as well as disclosing her expansive knowledge of literature.¹⁰⁴ Sensing the impulse of self-censorship at work in many of

¹⁰⁰ Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), x.

¹⁰¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁰² Virginia Woolf, *A Writer’s Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth, 1953).

¹⁰³ D 1-5 and L 1-6; the publication details given in my list of abbreviations for these volumes relate to the American paperback editions which I cite from in this thesis. Publication details for the first Hogarth editions are as follows: Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 Vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1975-1980); and Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell with Andrew McNeillie, 5 Vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1977-1984).

¹⁰⁴ Brenda R. Silver, *Virginia Woolf’s Reading Notebooks* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

her published texts, feminist critics began to look to the manuscripts of Woolf's novels and extended essays for evidence of deleted cultural criticism.

The early versions of Woolf's novels had first been subject to textual criticism in the late 1960s, notably through the scrutiny of Charles G. Hoffmann. During 1968-1969 Hoffmann published three short articles on Woolf's manuscript revisions to *Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando* and *The Years*.¹⁰⁵ These early studies of the draft material relating to Woolf's novels primarily focused on what the variant versions of her texts can tell us about how the formal structures of the published works were achieved. In the 1970s, the manuscript versions of Woolf's fictional and non-fictional works came under more sustained investigation as feminist critics and editors began to examine not only the form of Woolf's early drafts but also their subject matter and tone.

In 1977 the winter issue of the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* was entirely devoted to essays that reconsidered the social and political implications of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* in the light of draft material relating to these texts held at the NYPL. Essays in the volume challenged previous notions of Woolf's penultimate novel as politically disengaged and emphasised the pervasive presence of socio-feminist analysis in both works. Beverly Ann Schlack highlighted Woolf's use of scorn in both *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, for example, in order to 'dispel any lingering notion that a lyric, "delicate" sensibility like Woolf's was incapable of more substantial and defiant modes'.¹⁰⁶ Sallie Sears traced the portrayal of sexual politics in *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, contending that 'the meaning of sexuality in the novel is "political" rather than "personal"'.¹⁰⁷ Margaret Comstock considered how the formal structure of *The Years* 'may be said to be written on aesthetic principles that are the opposite of fascist'.¹⁰⁸ Other notable contributors to the *Bulletin* included Mitchell A. Leaska, who transcribed and edited the first volume and a half of *The Pargiters* manuscript published in 1978, and Grace Radin, who later produced *Virginia Woolf's The Years: The Evolution of a*

¹⁰⁵ Charles G. Hoffmann, 'From Short Story to Novel: The Manuscript Revisions of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 14: 2 (1968): 171-186; Hoffmann, 'Fact and Fantasy in *Orlando*: Virginia Woolf's Manuscript Revisions,' *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 10 (1968): 435-444; and Hoffmann, 'Virginia Woolf's Manuscript Revisions of *The Years*,' *PMLA* 84: 1 (1969): 79-89.

¹⁰⁶ Beverly Ann Schlack, 'Virginia Woolf's Strategy of Scorn in *The Years* and *Three Guineas*,' *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80: 2 (1977): 147.

¹⁰⁷ Sallie Sears, 'Notes on Sexuality: *The Years* and *Three Guineas*,' *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80: 2 (1977): 211.

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Comstock, 'The Loudspeaker and the Human Voice: Politics and the Form of *The Years*,' *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80: 2 (1977): 254.

Novel (1981), which still presents the most thorough investigation to date of this novel's development from conception, through manuscript, typescript and proof versions, to publication.¹⁰⁹ Such studies used the draft material of Woolf's fiction and non-fiction to enrich and politicise readings of the published works. On perceiving 'the trenchant, frequently scathing, cultural criticism beneath the surface of the seemingly flawless, apolitical, aestheticized work of art,' as Brenda R. Silver observes, feminist critics of Woolf's novels 'began to debate where and how this criticism, including the expression of anger, was encoded, and whether it was deformed, transformed, or strengthened as the novel moved toward the public realm.'¹¹⁰ The 'centrality of Woolf to studies of contemporary culture,' Silver claims, 'has a great deal to do with feminist critics in the 1970s and early 1980s who saw textual editing as a means to break through the surface of established texts and established views and bring to light "submerged" texts.'¹¹¹

The emphasis these feminist and textual critical approaches placed on resituating Woolf's writings within their cultural context was further extended by the emergence of new historicism in the 1980s. Stephen Greenblatt, a central proponent of this critical movement, argued in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) that since 'Language, like other sign systems, is a collective construction; our interpretative task must be to grasp more sensitively the consequences of this fact by investigating ... the social presence of the world in the literary text.'¹¹² Resonances of Greenblatt's historicist perspective can be found in Alex Zwerdling's highly influential *Virginia Woolf and The Real World* (1986).¹¹³ This pioneering study is still invaluable for its attentive, socially contextualised readings of Woolf's major novels and extended critical prose, which sought to bring Woolf down from the ivory tower that her readers and commentators have so often imagined her to occupy by demonstrating her writing's deep engagement

¹⁰⁹ Mitchell A. Leaska, 'Virginia Woolf, the Pargiter: A Reading of *The Years*,' *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80: 2 (1977): 172-210; Virginia Woolf, *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Hogarth, 1978); Grace Radin, "'Two enormous chunks": Episodes Excluded during the Final Revisions of *The Years*,' *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80: 2 (1977): 221-251; Grace Radin, *Virginia Woolf's The Years: The Evolution of a Novel* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

¹¹⁰ Brenda R. Silver, 'Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice: Or, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf Part II,' in *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation*, ed. George Bornstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 195.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹¹² Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 5.

¹¹³ Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (California: University of California Press, 1986).

with ‘the question of how people are shaped (or deformed) by their social environment.’¹¹⁴ His discussion of Woolf’s analysis of society as a whole and its effects on ‘people’ rather than women did much to widen critical appreciation of Woolf in the 1980s and to promote understanding of her oeuvre as a product of and a commentary on her time. Zwerdling’s work, with the authority of a monograph, consolidated the efforts of feminist critics over the preceding decade to deconstruct the image of Woolf as an isolated aesthete. It should be noted, however, that a significant overlap exists between the aims and methods of much feminist and historicist criticism of Woolf. The essays of Gillian Beer, for example, which significantly re-contextualise Woolf’s writings within her Victorian upbringing, have been highly influential in shaping a self-consciously feminist historical approach to Woolf.¹¹⁵ ‘Feminist-historicism’ emerged in the late 1980s through the work of critics like Beer as an influential counter to the linguistically conceived feminism advocated by critics writing in the tradition of French feminism at this time.

Of course, many critics writing at this point or after have challenged the politicised version of Woolf’s oeuvre offered by feminist, historicist and textually critical revisionings of her work from the 1970s and 1980s. While these politicised reinterpretations have thrived amongst the main strands of Woolf scholarship, within the wider field of literary studies and beyond Woolf continues to be viewed with some suspicion. Woolf’s writings met a particularly high-profile backlash in her home country in the early 1990s, exemplified by Tom Paulin’s depiction of Woolf as ‘one of the most over-rated literary figures of the twentieth century’ in *J’accuse: Virginia Woolf*, a television programme broadcast on Britain’s Channel Four in 1991.¹¹⁶ John Carey’s contemporaneous and highly influential monograph *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992) similarly presented Woolf as an overvalued proponent of elitist, high culture.¹¹⁷ Carey alleged that, contrary to the claims of feminist and historicist critics of her work, ‘what the “vast mass” felt or thought was not of much concern to Virginia

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹¹⁵ See, in particular, ‘The Victorians in Virginia Woolf: 1832-1941’ (1988), collected in Beer, *Woolf: The Common Ground*, 92-111.

¹¹⁶ Tom Paulin, *J’accuse: Virginia Woolf*, dir. Jeff Morgan, Fulmar Productions, London: Channel 4, 29 January 1991.

¹¹⁷ John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber, 1992).

Woolf.¹¹⁸ In 1996 Marcus read these negative portrayals of Woolf as demonstrative of the misogyny and inverse snobbery of British academia. 'Books on the Thirties ... from Samuel Hynes to Valentine Cunningham, continue to denigrate, scapegoat or ignore [Woolf's] contribution to social debates and political activities,' Marcus observed, yet her 'revolutionary credentials as a critic are certainly as good as Terry Eagleton,' one of the Marxist critics who joined Paulin in 'Woolf-bashing' in *J'accuse*.¹¹⁹ Silver's insightful *Virginia Woolf Icon* (1999) similarly identified the 'gender and class anxieties' that are 'presented so naively' in Paulin and Eagleton's crude depiction of Woolf as an 'emblem of the reigning cultural system, the old order,' and their disregard for her iconic significance as a 'subversive articulation of subcultural desires and power.'¹²⁰ The omission of Woolf from histories of activist British literature of the 1930s, as Marcus and Silver suggest, in part reflects the class and gender prejudices of a predominately male, liberal critical establishment, whose readings of Woolf's work may be limited by their hostility toward the complacent behaviour of large portions of the financially comfortable English upper-middle classes earlier in the twentieth century. Conversely, such unsympathetic depictions of Woolf have only fuelled scholarship of her oeuvre in the last twenty years, prompting critics to expand and emphasise their analysis of the ways in which Woolf's writing critiques society as a whole, not just the small class of educated men's daughters she so often addresses.

The publication of a full, chronological edition of Woolf's essays has been crucial to these recent reappraisals. Before 1986 Woolf's journalistic writings remained largely uncollected. Leonard Woolf's four-volume Hogarth Press edition of his wife's *Collected Essays*, published through 1966-1967, included only those essays that Virginia Woolf had herself prepared for publication within a signed monograph edition in her lifetime (for example, those articles revised for publication in the *Common Reader* volumes), therefore offering more of a selection than a 'collected' edition.¹²¹ The majority of Woolf's essays, articles and book reviews thus remained available only within the ephemeral newspapers and magazines in which they first appeared; many of them, including the large number printed within the *TLS*, were unsigned. From 1986,

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹¹⁹ Marcus, 'Wrapped in the Stars and Stripes,' 19.

¹²⁰ Brenda R. Silver, *Virginia Woolf Icon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 150-151.

¹²¹ *CE* 1-4; see my list of abbreviations for full details of this edition, vi.

however, the Hogarth Press began to publish *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, a complete, six-volume edition of Woolf's essays directed and edited by Andrew McNeillie.¹²² In contrast to the *Collected Essays*, this edition aimed to provide an annotated resource suitable for 'the reader interested in the author's development and the context in which her professional life was lived.'¹²³ A pause of fifteen years followed the release of the fourth volume in 1994, after which publication of the edition recommenced under the editorship of Stuart N. Clarke with the release of the fifth volume in January 2009. Essays produced in the period spanned by the first four volumes of the edition, 1904-1928, understandably received the most attention in the 1990s as the serial release of these volumes gradually widened access to and commentary on Woolf's journalism.

Before the mid-1990s Woolf's essays, reviews and journalistic articles were rarely studied even within the relatively limited field of Woolf scholarship except where they aided discussion of her fiction or her feminism.¹²⁴ Her *Common Reader* volumes, popular in her lifetime, were largely overlooked by book-length studies of her oeuvre.¹²⁵ In the late 1990s a number of monographs on Woolf's literary and cultural journalism appeared to address this imbalance. Beth Carole Rosenberg's *Virginia Woolf and Samuel Johnson: Common Readers* (1995) presented Woolf as a successor of Johnson within the English critical tradition while arguing that her innovative prose technique distinguished her from the great eighteenth- and nineteenth-century 'men of letters' and 'places her among the most important writers of th[e twentieth] century.'¹²⁶ Leila Brosnan's *Reading Virginia Woolf's Essays and Journalism* (1997) and the insightful articles included in *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* (1997), edited by Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino, collectively demonstrated the financial, professional and intellectual importance of journalism to Woolf, whose unorthodox style and approach to literary and cultural criticism were shaped and polished through the production of nearly six-

¹²² E 1-5; see my list of abbreviations for full details of this edition, vi.

¹²³ Andrew McNeillie, introduction to E 1, x.

¹²⁴ A notable exception to this rule is Perry Meisel's *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf & Walter Pater* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), in which Meisel convincingly argues that Woolf's non-fictional prose adopts a selection of Pater's most characteristic tropes.

¹²⁵ Not until 2009 did the *Common Reader* volumes receive a comprehensive, book-length survey with the publication of Katrina Koutsantoni's *Virginia Woolf's Common Reader* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

¹²⁶ Beth Carole Rosenberg, *Virginia Woolf and Samuel Johnson: Common Readers* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), xvi.

hundred articles and reviews during her thirty-seven-year journalistic career.¹²⁷

‘Woolf’s real confrontation with the male literary establishment,’ Juliet Dusinberre claimed in *Virginia Woolf’s Renaissance: Woman Reader or Common Reader* (1997), ‘took place when she thought of herself not as a novelist but as a literary critic.’¹²⁸ The title of Dusinberre’s work implicitly allied Woolf’s feminism with a socialist impulse. ‘A woman reader does not start with high authorities,’ Dusinberre asserted, aligning Woolf’s gender with an intrinsic, perhaps troublingly essentialist, sympathy for egalitarian principles of education.¹²⁹ Gualtieri’s *Virginia Woolf’s Essays: Sketching the Past* (2000) provided a detailed survey of Woolf’s use of the essay form, in particular, tracing Woolf’s emphasis on ‘the connection between the essay and autobiography’ in an attempt to ‘identify within what she saw as a male tradition an alternative line of descent to which she could affiliate herself.’¹³⁰ As well as highlighting Woolf’s accomplishment as a prolific, professional essayist, each of these works also used Woolf’s journalism to stress her active engagement in the prominent literary and social debates of her time.

Woolf’s diverse interactions with mass print culture have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years as the popular perception of high modernist writers operating beyond the constraints of the literary market has been steadily deconstructed.¹³¹ In this context, many critics have turned their attention to Woolf’s role as a public critic of culture. Snaith’s *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (2000) supplies a book-length study of Woolf’s use of the terms public and private, the influence of this dichotomy on her life and work, her reception by her reading public and the manner in which Woolf became a public figure.¹³² The essays collected in *Virginia Woolf and Fascism: Resisting the Dictator’s Seduction* (2001), edited by Pawlowski, explore

¹²⁷ Leila Brosnan, *Reading Virginia Woolf’s Essays and Journalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino, eds., *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

¹²⁸ Juliet Dusinberre, *Virginia Woolf’s Renaissance: Woman Reader or Common Reader?* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹³⁰ Gualtieri, *Woolf’s Essays: Sketching the Past*, 49.

¹³¹ For example of such debate see Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Paul Delany, *Literature, Money and the Market* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Anne E. Fernald, ‘A Feminist Public Sphere?: Virginia Woolf’s Revisions of the Eighteenth Century,’ *Feminist Studies* 31: 1 (2005): 158-182; Patrick Collier, *Modernism on Fleet Street* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

¹³² Anna Snaith, *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 1-5.

Woolf's contribution to the public debates surrounding European fascism through her critiques of British patriarchy with a focus on her late output and *Three Guineas*.¹³³ In *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* (2005), Christine Froula positions Woolf at the centre of Bloomsbury's public thinking about European civilisation during the interwar period through her activity as a writer and publisher.¹³⁴ Studies of Woolf's involvement in newspaper and magazine culture are also on the rise in contemporary Woolf scholarship as the field engages enthusiastically with periodical studies, an emergent branch of literary and cultural studies that regards periodicals as complex cultural objects worthy of investigation.¹³⁵ The publication of the fifth volume of *The Essays of Virginia Woolf* in 2009 and the anticipated release of the sixth and final volume in 2010, which together span the period 1929-1941, will presumably lead to further debate of Woolf's interactions with periodicals in the years to come, as scholarly attention turns to the less frequently studied journalistic writings of her later career.¹³⁶

'Today,' Briggs observed in 2005, 'our own redefinition of politics, to include gender quite as much as race and class, events at home as well as away, is due in no small part to the arguments advanced in *Three Guineas*.'¹³⁷ Woolf's reputation as a public commentator on gender and cultural politics is now secure. Yet her feminist arguments are still open to reassessment. Compare, for example, Melba Cuddy-Keane's *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (2003) and Anne E. Fernald's *Virginia Woolf: Feminism and the Reader* (2006), two works that discuss Woolf's involvement in pedagogical debates.¹³⁸ While Cuddy-Keane sidelines Woolf's feminism, aiming 'to take Woolf outside the borders that would limit her sphere to Bloomsbury, or to high modernism, or to feminism, and to locate both the person and

¹³³ Merry M. Pawlowski, ed., *Virginia Woolf and Fascism: Resisting the Dictators' Seduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

¹³⁴ Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 10-11.

¹³⁵ On the study of periodicals in Woolf studies see Patrick Collier, 'Woolf and Periodicals,' *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 76 (2009): 1-2, an editorial introduction to this special issue on 'Woolf in Periodicals/Woolf on Periodicals.' For an overview of the emergent field of periodical studies see Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies,' *PMLA* 121: 1 (2006): 517-531.

¹³⁶ Snaith's *Public and Private Negotiations* is one of the few critical works to date to focus on Woolf's 1930s essays; despite the wealth of interest in *Three Guineas* over the last decade, Woolf's journalistic essays of 1930-1941 remain relatively under-studied.

¹³⁷ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, 337.

¹³⁸ Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Anne E. Fernald, *Virginia Woolf: Feminism and the Reader* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

her ideas in ... public debates about books, reading, and education,' Fernald presents Woolf's feminist position as fundamental to her views on reading and learning.¹³⁹ 'Woolf's importance to educated women around the world derives much more from her legacy as a feminist artist and theorist,' Fernald asserts, 'than from her feminist social activism.'¹⁴⁰ These differing positions indicate the extent to which Woolf's feminism and the political implications of that feminism are still very much up for debate in the early twenty-first century.

This thesis supplies a fresh perspective on Woolf's late social and political thinking by offering the first genetic, feminist-historicist exploration of the development of her cultural criticism during the years 1930-1941. My analysis of Woolf's late cultural criticism obviously extends out of the recent scholarly attention given to her role as a public commentator on contemporary society and politics in her last decade. Here I opt to describe Woolf as a cultural critic rather than as a public intellectual in order to emphasise her attempts to engage with multiple social, political and economic issues facing the society around her in her late career. Following the publication of Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses* in 1992, the term 'public intellectual' carries negative connotations of elitism, social snobbery and isolation from mass culture within British literary studies which this thesis specifically wishes to avoid. Describing Woolf as a 'cultural critic' distances my reading of her late output from such connotations and indicates the diversity of subjects, all encompassed by the word 'culture,' that Woolf's late feminist cultural analysis addressed: from women's social and economic position in society; to contemporary consumerism; to the relationship of literature to politics; to the complex links between patriarchy, imperialism and war. By using the label 'feminist-historicist' to describe my theoretical outlook I signal my desire to follow the activity of feminist-historicist critics from Beer onwards who have demonstrated that only through historically contextualising Woolf's writings can we fully understand her feminist stance. My fusion of a feminist-historicist approach with the principles of genetic criticism gestures towards the importance of textual scholarship to the late twentieth-century recovery of Woolf as a social and political thinker, and indicates my conviction

¹³⁹ Cuddy-Keane, *Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, 8.

¹⁴⁰ Fernald, *Woolf: Feminism and the Reader*, 15.

that this relatively little-known branch of textual criticism has much to offer contemporary Woolf studies.

A Genetic Approach to Woolf

Genetic criticism developed as an investigative approach to manuscript study amongst French literary scholars in the 1970s. The discipline's name was taken from the editorial afterword and title of *Essais de critique génétique*, an early collection of articles on the subject edited by Louis Hay and published in 1979.¹⁴¹ Genetic analysis was already developing before this date, however, with Jean Bellemin-Noël's coinage of the term *avant-texte* in 1972.¹⁴² Drawing on the theories of structuralism and post-structuralism, genetic criticism focuses on the *process* rather than the *product* of literary composition. Bellemin-Noël's later observation that manuscript study may tempt us to 'supply a *before* in the sense of a priority, cause or origin' to texts which 'had, at first, no *after*' persists as one of the core principles of genetic criticism and makes the methodology particularly applicable to study of Woolf, a writer whose anxieties about setting her works into any permanent form led her to revise them perpetually even after publication for subsequent editors.¹⁴³ When applied to a study of the genesis and evolution of Woolf's cultural criticism between 1930 and 1941, genetic criticism's central caveat highlights the need to be wary of superimposing Woolf's subsequent radicalism on her preceding writings; of reading her socio-political stance in *Three Guineas* in texts and pre-texts produced earlier in the decade. Yet while striving to be objective we must also admit, as Dirk van Hulle cautions in his 2004 genetic study of Joyce, Proust and Mann, that '[s]ince researchers often have the advantage but also the disadvantage of hindsight manuscript studies may always involve some degree of

¹⁴¹ Louis Hay, ed., *Essais de critique génétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).

¹⁴² Jean Bellemin-Noël, *Le Texte et l'avant-texte: Les Brouillons d'un poème de Milosz* (Paris: Larousse, 1972).

¹⁴³ Jean Bellemin-Noël, 'Psychoanalytic Reading and the Avant-texte,' in *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes*, ed. Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 31 (emphasis in original); published in French as 'Avant-texte et lecture psychoanalytique' (1982). On Woolf's revisions pre- and post-publication, see Julia Briggs, 'Between the Texts: Virginia Woolf's Acts of Revision,' in *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 208-230.

genetic manipulation.’¹⁴⁴ This thesis will endeavour to remain sensitive to the changing focus and fluctuating activism of Woolf’s social and political thinking in the years 1930-1941 through a self-conscious awareness of the dangers of retrospective reading.

The second aspect of genetic criticism that will enrich this thesis’s portrayal of Woolf’s developing radicalism in her late writings is the discipline’s historicist emphasis on reading texts within the economic, social and political climate in which they were produced. Writing in 1979, Hay framed genetic criticism as a version of manuscript study that combats the prospective hazard of viewing literary documents in isolation from their historical context by recognising that ‘the text is marked by social structures, ideologies, and cultural traditions ... [so] that in its warp and woof we can read, at every moment, the truth of the time ... [o]r rather a certain truth since the cultural imprint is inscribed in each text in a specific fashion.’¹⁴⁵ This perception of texts as porous objects, absorbing their social and cultural surroundings during production in a manner that allows future generations to recapture ‘the truth of the time’ through reading them, distinguishes genetic criticism from traditional manuscript study and accounts for my stress in this thesis on the social, political and economic backdrop against which Woolf’s late cultural criticism evolved. This materialist outlook sits comfortably with a feminist-historicist reading of Woolf, reinforcing the necessity of acknowledging the influence of contemporary writing and the contemporary political climate on Woolf’s working notes, drafts, published essays and fiction, as well as her twenty-five years of previous thinking and writing as a cultural and feminist critic. Genetic criticism supplies not only a useful toolkit with which to investigate the extensive pre-publication materials connected with Woolf’s 1930s writings, but also a valuable method of viewing Woolf’s published works of the period as both transitory materialisations of a wider, fluid thinking process, and contained, stable artefacts, marked by the historical and sociological origins that shaped the composition of each.

Given the large amount of interest in manuscripts analysis within Woolf scholarship, it is surprising that genetic criticism has received so little attention within the field. Only recently have Woolf’s Anglophone critics and editors begun to talk

¹⁴⁴ Dirk van Hulle, *Textual Awareness: A Genetic Study of Late Manuscripts by Joyce, Proust, and Mann* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁴⁵ Louis Hay, ‘Genetic Criticism: Origins and Perspectives,’ in *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes*, 23; published in French as ‘La Critique génétique: Origines et perspectives’ (1979).

about this largely French school of textual studies. In 1995 Christine Froula identified a 'shift from idealist to modernist notions of literary authority' in Woolf's genetic texts, which, Froula argued, evidence Woolf's attempts to acknowledge her writing's 'historical embeddedness' through representation of herself and her audience in works such as *A Room of One's Own*.¹⁴⁶ In 2002 Edward Bishop detailed the pervasive influence of genetic criticism on his edition of the holograph draft of *Jacob's Room* (published in 1998).¹⁴⁷ In 2005 Julia Briggs implicitly adopted a genetic approach to her biography of Woolf, focusing on Woolf's inner life as a writer and the possibility of tracking 'the genesis and process of [her] writing' through surviving drafts, her letters and diaries.¹⁴⁸ In 2008 *Woolf Online*, an electronic genetic edition of the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*, became the first edition of a Woolf text to be edited according to genetic principles, and, according to Rebecca Wisor, 'the first edition of a work written by Woolf to have been edited according to contemporary textual editing theories and practices.'¹⁴⁹ This year (2010) Finn Fordham's *I Do, I Undo, I Redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves* explores 'the relations between processes of composition and reformulations of the self during the modernist period' with a chapter on *The Waves*.¹⁵⁰ These early applications of genetic criticism to Woolf, perhaps with the exception of Froula, coincide with an increased interest in editing Woolf over the past decade, during which, in response to the flurry of new editions that accompanied the temporary release of her works from copyright in Britain in the 1990s, critics and editors have turned to textual criticism to examine the material condition of Woolf's texts.¹⁵¹ Before this point, despite the centrality of manuscript analysis to Woolf studies, the majority of her critics and editors have seemed strangely unwilling to engage

¹⁴⁶ Christine Froula, 'Modernism, Genetic Texts and Literary Authority in Virginia Woolf's Portraits of the Artist as the Audience,' *The Romantic Review* 86: 3 (1995): 525.

¹⁴⁷ See Edward Bishop, 'The Alfa and the Avant-texte: Transcribing Virginia Woolf's Manuscripts,' in *Editing Virginia Woolf: Interpreting the Modernist Text*, ed. James M. Haule and J. H. Stape (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 139-157; and Virginia Woolf, *Virginia Woolf's Jacob's Room: The Holograph Draft*, trans. and ed. Edward L. Bishop (New York: Pace University Press, 1998).

¹⁴⁸ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, xi.

¹⁴⁹ Rebecca Wisor, 'Versioning Virginia Woolf: Notes toward a Post-eclectic Edition of *Three Guineas*,' *Modernism/Modernity* 16: 3 (2009): 498. See Virginia Woolf, *Woolf Online: An Electronic Edition and Commentary on Virginia Woolf's 'Time Passes'*, ed. Julia Briggs, Peter Shillingsburg and Marilyn Deegan [Web site and database] (De Montfort University, 2008); available from <<http://www.woolfonline.com>>; accessed 26 March 2010.

¹⁵⁰ Finn Fordham, *I Do, I Undo, I Redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce, and Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

¹⁵¹ For an overview of these new editions and the debate they have engendered see James M. Haule and J. H. Stape's introduction to *Editing Virginia Woolf*, 1-10.

directly with the practices and terminology of textual scholarship, as if they have been afraid that to do so would leave them trapped within theoretical discussions of the documental remnants of Woolf's oeuvre and unable to debate the aesthetic and political implications of her works as a whole. As this trend ends, the time at last appears to be right for Woolf studies to embrace genetic criticism.

This thesis seizes on genetic criticism's potential as an analytical tool to explore Woolf's manuscripts and the writing and thinking processes that traverse her oeuvre in her printed works. I expand the outlook of genetic criticism, fusing it with a feminist-historicist perspective, to examine the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism through a selection of her late published and unpublished texts. As a prelude to my study of her later writings, Chapter 1 traces the genesis of Woolf's cultural criticism in her feminist life-writing practices of 1904-1931; from her early biographical journalism and mid-1920s essays, to *A Room of One's Own* and her introductory letter to *Life As We Have Known It*. Critics have long noted the connection between Woolf's early biographies of women and her later feminist social criticism.¹⁵² From her earliest biographical journalism, this chapter will demonstrate, Woolf's innovative life-writing methods, her blurring of fact with fiction, and her refusal to limit her description of lives to subjects that were typically regarded as 'great' or 'good' signified a feminist resistance to the patriarchal cultural values advocated by her nineteenth-century biographical predecessors. Woolf's dissident biographical writings of 1904-1931 can thus be interpreted as an early manifestation of her dissident cultural criticism. Her development of a form of collective feminist biography, evident in a 1927 review 'Two Women' and *A Room of One's Own*, and her later exposure of this collective portrait of women's experience as a myth through her discussion of working women's lives in her preface to *Life As We Have Known It*, evidences the development of Woolf's feminist analysis of culture. Moving into the 1930s, this chapter concludes, Woolf probed her own class-consciousness as she entered the leftist debates of the time.

In contrast to Chapter 1's opening survey, Chapter 2 focuses on the early months of 1931 and a series of six articles that Woolf produced for *Good Housekeeping* magazine at this time. From a retrospective viewpoint, I contend, these six articles evidence the transitional moment at which Woolf directed her attention further towards

¹⁵² See Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), 13.

cultural criticism. Woolf's construction of a subversive Baedeker-style critique of industrialised London for this commission reflects her contemporaneous concern that her writing should be more culturally engaged. Drawing on the insights of periodical studies, a discipline that seeks to analyse periodicals in their entirety, this chapter will examine Woolf's cultural criticism in these essays in the context of the editorial, feature and advertising material that surrounded them in their original place of publication. Careful study of *Good Housekeeping*'s origins, outlook and routine content in the 1920s and early 1930s, I argue, reveals that Woolf's feminist analysis of patriarchal Britain in her *London Scene* series was pertinently addressed to the predominantly female, middle-class readers of this popular women's magazine, whose interests and concerns were far more diverse than Woolf scholars have often assumed.

In Chapter 3 I trace the complex evolutionary process that links Woolf's most explicit work of cultural criticism, *Three Guineas*, to *The Years* and *The Pargiters*. Situating these texts in their contemporary political context, this chapter explores the private and public events that led Woolf to combine her feminist commentary on the historically oppressed position of women with her pacifism at this time. My analysis examines the development of Woolf's shifting critiques of patriarchy and fascism through this period, from her first conception of 'a sequel to *A Room of One's Own*' in January 1931 through to the publication of her feminist polemic in 1938, questioning Woolf's contention that *The Years* and *Three Guineas* are 'one book.'¹⁵³ Using the practices of genetic criticism to explore the extensive pre-publication materials Woolf produced in relation to *The Pargiters*, *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, this chapter evaluates the merits and limitations of applying this branch of textual studies to study of Woolf's manuscripts. The multiple documents associated with Woolf's major feminist project of the 1930s highlight her extreme formal innovation in this decade, shattering the popular perception that Woolf abandoned modernist experimentalism later in her career in favour of realism, and demonstrating the extent to which her aesthetic and political radicalism were entwined in this era.

My final chapter turns to Woolf's final novel, *Between the Acts*, and, more broadly, to the ways in which this aesthetic work responds to Woolf's critical reflections of the preceding decade on the role of art in times of social and political

¹⁵³ D 4: 6; D 5: 148.

chaos. The first half of the chapter surveys Woolf's statements on the subject through the years 1932-1941 and her troubled reactions to the politicised literature produced by Auden and his contemporaries. Woolf's thinking on the relation of art to politics contains a number of long-term contradictions, I argue, including a fundamental conflict between her inherent confidence in art's potential to humanise and raise its individual appreciators above the barbaric behaviours of society in the mass, and her strong belief that both art and the artist are indelibly connected to and the product of the society in which they exist. The second half of Chapter 4 traces Woolf's playfully anti-nationalist representation of English history and culture in *Between the Acts*, teasing out how this satirical portrayal of patriarchy and patriotism extends out of and diverges from that offered by Woolf in the 1930s. This novel brings together elements of Woolf's sociological, feminist and pacifist analysis from her earlier fictional and non-fictional writings to present a view of contemporary culture that is understandably less positive than that offered in Woolf's 1930s texts, but which ultimately reveals the same persistent conviction that literature might be capable of inducing socio-political change, even if, in the moment of war, it sadly cannot possibly affect peace.

A genetic study of Woolf's late cultural criticism, my conclusion will argue, highlights the extent to which her increased social and political commentary in the 1930s and early 1940s developed from, rather than rejected, the modernist experimentation of her earlier writings. Woolf's determination to channel her aesthetic and critical energies into extending and sharing her critique of patriarchy in the early 1930s was motivated by contemporary literary trends and the political climate of the time, but also by her relentless creative drive and constant hunger for new intellectual challenges. The formal innovation of Woolf's late career, and the close relationship between this formal innovation and her political radicalism, both undermines the integrity of viewing Woolf's oeuvre in two distinct phases – the modernist 1920s and the political 1930s – and challenges the use of such labels in wider critical histories of interwar literature. Woolf's late cultural criticism, this thesis will demonstrate, was as much a product of her early feminist and aesthetic viewpoint as it was a reaction to the economic, social and political crises that dominated Europe during 1930-1941.

Writing Women's Lives: Woolf's Early Cultural Criticism, 1904-1931

Introduction

Writing in 1927 Woolf defined 'the whole problem of biography' as the necessity of welding together 'truth,' which is 'something of granite-like solidity,' with 'personality,' which is 'something of rainbow-like intangibility.'¹ 'Victorian biography was a parti-coloured, hybrid, monstrous birth,' in Woolf's opinion: 'For though truth of fact was observed as scrupulously as Boswell observed it, the personality which Boswell's genius set free was hampered and distorted.'² '[I]n order that the light of personality may shine through,' she argued, 'facts must be manipulated [...] yet, in the process, they must never lose their integrity.'³ Woolf's subversive approach to the problematic business of 'life-writing,' a useful term that Hermione Lee adopts to group together biography, autobiography, letters, memoirs and diaries as one genre,⁴ was conceived in direct opposition to the Victorian biographer's subservience to fact and his 'dominat[ion] by the idea of goodness.'⁵ Woolf's biographical writings exhibit a refusal to limit her focus to the lives of those who might typically be applauded as 'great' or 'good' and a willingness to supplement documentary evidence with invention in order to better represent the inner life of the individuals she describes. From her early biographical journalism through to her later pseudo-biographies of *Orlando* and *Flush*, Woolf exploited life-writing's fluidity. Her experiments in the genre blend fact with fiction, biography with autobiography, and life-writing with social commentary, undermining the Victorian quest for a fact-filled, objective biography through demonstrating that the writing of a life or, indeed, of history, is always a subjective and

¹ Virginia Woolf, 'The New Biography,' in *E* 4, 473.

² *Ibid.*, 474.

³ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁴ Hermione Lee, *Body Parts: Essays on Life-Writing* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2005), 3. I hyphenate 'life-writing' here, as Lee does and Woolf herself did, to indicate that I follow Lee's inclusive use of the term to link together biography and autobiography. Another dominant, predominantly North American strand of literary criticism uses 'life writing,' generally written as two words, in the eighteenth-century sense to mean autobiography; see, for example, Lauren Rusk's *The Life Writing of Otherness: Woolf, Baldwin, Kingston, and Winterson* (London: Routledge, 2002), 2-3.

⁵ Woolf, 'The New Biography,' 474.

creative act. Woolf's fusion of life-writing with feminist commentary, evident in her biographical accounts of women through the period 1904-1931, represents an early manifestation of her late cultural criticism. Moving into the 1930s, Woolf drew on the experimental forms and unorthodox themes of her earlier life-writing as she sought to find a new, dissident genre to convey her evolving feminist analyses of contemporary culture.

Woolf's early biographies of women have long been recognised as the genesis of her feminist criticism. Lee observes, for example, that 'Woolf's feminist programme ... is inextricably bound up with her desire to "revolutionise biography" ... [and] find new forms for "women's as yet unnarrated lives"'.⁶ Much has been made of Woolf's exploration of the historical oppression of women in her biographical writings of 1904-1929, but less attention has been given to the process by which her investigations into women's histories evolved into feminist analysis of contemporary culture. This chapter surveys the early development of Woolf's experimental, feminist approach to life-writing, illustrating how social commentary became an increasingly explicit feature of her biographical writings in the late 1920s and early 1930s. My discussion begins by reading Woolf's biographical reviews at the outset of her literary career alongside contemporary biographical journalism, highlighting her penchant for unlikely female subjects and her innovative practice of transforming reviews into pieces of life-writing within themselves. It then examines Woolf's development of a form of feminist biography in the 1920s, through which she portrayed individual lives as representative of a collective life of women. A genetic study of 'Two Women,' a 1927 review, alongside *A Room of One's Own*, illustrates how Woolf's 1929 feminist pamphlet evolved from such earlier biographical essays and demonstrates her subversive practice of manipulating biographical fact to strengthen her feminist argument. The third section turns to Woolf's preface to *Life As We Have Known It*, a volume of autobiographical writings by working women published in 1931.⁷ By accentuating the class divisions that cut across gender in this text Woolf destabilises her earlier collective life of women through depicting working- and middle-class women as separated by innumerable

⁶ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), 13; internal quotations from Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1988), 28.

⁷ Margaret Llewelyn Davies, ed., *Life As We Have Known It: By Co-operative Working Women* (London: Virago, 1990).

differences in experience. This contentious essay anticipates the self-consciously middle-class feminist stance of *Three Guineas* and reflects her 1930s desire to probe and analyse her own class-consciousness as she entered the leftist public debates of the time. Tracing the roots of Woolf's late cultural criticism through her early biographical studies of women reveals that her late feminist cultural analysis was as much a product of her life-long interest in analysing women's experience within British patriarchal society, past and present, as it was a consequence of the activist literary climate of her last decade.

Woolf's Biographical Journalism, 1904-1920

From her earliest years as a writer, Woolf – then Stephen – had a fascination with biography. Throughout her childhood, she had witnessed her father reading, writing, and summarising lives in his role as editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*). In his library she developed a passion for rummaging through memoirs and letters. As Katherine C. Hill has noted, 'Stephen tutored Virginia extensively in biography as well as history, and this education, stemming as it did from Stephen's beliefs about the interrelations of biography, history, and literature, was crucial in shaping her own approach to literary criticism.'⁸ Biography's command over Woolf corresponds to the phenomena, described most comprehensively by Gillian Beer, by which Woolf remained gripped in adulthood by her highly literary, Victorian upbringing; recording and honouring lives was part of 'the culture within which she grew, out of which she grew, and which she never quite grew out of.'⁹ While Leslie Stephen's obsession with biography became her own, however, Woolf rejected his ideal of the model biographer. 'Her many biographical sketches of women made a counter-claim to her father's writings,' Julia Briggs observes, 'as if setting up a posthumous interrogation of [the *DNB*'s] principles of inclusion, or else directing attention to the major omissions in [Stephen's] coverage.'¹⁰ Her elevation of unlikely subjects is

⁸ Katherine C. Hill, 'Virginia Woolf and Leslie Stephen: History and Literary Revolution,' *PMLA* 96: 3 (1981): 353.

⁹ Gillian Beer, 'The Victorians in Virginia Woolf: 1882-1941,' in *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 94.

¹⁰ Julia Briggs, "'The Proper Writing of Lives': Biography versus Fiction in Woolf's Early Work,' in *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 27.

inextricably bound to her feminism and closely anticipates the feminist viewpoint of her later cultural criticism.

Woolf's literary career began late in 1904. Recovering from the mental breakdown which followed her father's death, Woolf was given the job of reading through his correspondence and selecting extracts for inclusion in F. W. Maitland's *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*.¹¹ The task passed to Woolf from her brother Thoby in the hope that it would aid her recuperation and led to her contributing a short unsigned biographical 'Note' for Maitland's work. Before the year was over, Woolf had also secured her first professional commission as a journalist. Through the encouragement and connections of family friend Violet Dickinson, Woolf entered into dialogue with Margaret Lyttelton who edited the women's pages of a weekly paper for the clergy called the *Guardian*.¹² Although it was primarily as a reviewer that Woolf began to write for periodicals from 1904 onwards, her interest in biography and, particularly, in women's lives is evident from her earliest articles. In response to Lyttelton's invitation that Woolf might submit 1500 words on 'any subject' Woolf wrote an account of a recent visit to the former home of the Brontë sisters, Haworth Parsonage, in Yorkshire.¹³ This essay, in common with much of Woolf's early biographical journalism, explores the difficulty of accessing or recording the life of another without romanticising or misinterpreting their experience.

'Haworth, November, 1904' opens with the proposition that 'pilgrimages to the shrines of famous men' should be 'condemned as sentimental journeys' unless the subject's house 'adds something to our understanding of his books.'¹⁴ The focus of this essay is set out as the effect of Haworth on the writing of the Brontës and not biographical incident. Woolf soon subverts this outline, however, transforming her essay into a piece of, and about, biographical writing. Personal details creep into her descriptions of setting, evoking the lives of Haworth's inhabitants. We discover 'the big town [...] in which Charlotte walked to make her more important purchases – her wedding gown, perhaps' and 'the oblong recess beside the staircase into which Emily

¹¹ Frederic William Maitland, *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (London: Duckworth, 1906).

¹² No relation to the modern-day British broadsheet.

¹³ *L* 1: 155.

¹⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'Haworth, November, 1904,' in *E* 1, 5.

drove her bulldog [...] while she pommelled him.’¹⁵ The physical environment is constantly depicted in relation to the Brontës’ experiences within it. By indicating her narrator’s curiosity about biographical details, Woolf playfully undermines her opening highbrow stance that visitors should sit a literature examination before entering a writer’s former home to ensure the intellectual interest of the ‘literary tourist.’¹⁶ Later accounts of Woolf’s visits to ‘literary shrines’ – her 1909 sketch of ‘Carlyle’s House,’ for example – similarly focus on the insights that literary homes offer into the private rather than the public lives of their occupants.¹⁷

The domestic picture of Haworth that Woolf builds through detailing the ‘little personal relics’ of the house’s famous former occupants eventually overshadows their literary achievements.¹⁸ ‘Charlotte Brontë the woman comes to life,’ Woolf asserts, ‘and one forgets the chiefly memorable fact that she was a great writer.’¹⁹ Although the house contains letters, documents and drawings, it is the ‘trifling’ domestic objects such as clothing and furniture which present ‘the most touching’ exhibits.²⁰ Woolf illustrates how these objects capture the imagination by using them to colour her depiction of the sisters. The delicate and flimsy fabric of Charlotte’s ‘thin muslin dress’ is reflected in the vulnerability and lightness with which Charlotte is presented as a ‘slight figure [...] trotting along the streets.’²¹ The physical qualities and intellectual associations of Emily’s ‘little oak stool’ are reflected in Woolf’s portrayal of its owner as robust, ‘solitary’ and wise, ‘tramp[ing]’ the moors alone and then sitting down ‘to think what was probably better than her writing.’²² Woolf both delights in the feeling that ‘Haworth expresses the Brontës; the Brontës express Haworth’ and satirises the romanticised idea that domestic objects display the character of their owners.²³ In her later novels Woolf interrogated further the link between material things, their owners, and the extent to which belongings can evoke a person or a situation. For example, when Mrs Flanders helplessly holds out her son’s ‘old shoes’ at the close of *Jacob’s*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, ‘Carlyle’s House,’ in *Carlyle’s House and Other Stories*, ed. David Bradshaw (London: Hesperus, 2003), 3-4. I discuss Woolf’s portrayals of Carlyle’s House in Chapter 2, 111-114.

¹⁸ Woolf, ‘Haworth,’ 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²² *Ibid.*, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Room, Woolf stresses the way in which these well-worn objects, exhibiting an empty space the exact size and shape of their wearer's feet, can poignantly accentuate Jacob's absence following his death in World War I.²⁴ Similarly, in *The Years*, trinkets, pictures and items of furniture from Abercorn Terrace crop up repeatedly in later sections of the narrative as reminders of the Pargiters' former Victorian home. Martin's walrus ink pot appears several times in the text, prompting the reader to recall its owners' past life as Eleanor reflects that she had never thrown it away 'because it was a part of other things – her mother for example.'²⁵ The question of how to avoid sentimentality when recounting or imagining a person's life and the issue of how physical remnants might connect with that person's inner life became recurrent themes in Woolf's fiction as well as her biography.

The theme of biography remained prominent in Woolf's early journalism as she began writing for more prestigious publications, significantly, developing a relationship with Bruce Richmond at the *Times Literary Supplement* for whom she would write the majority of her essays.²⁶ In 1905, a fifth of the thirty-five articles Woolf wrote for the *Guardian*, the *TLS*, the *National Review* and *Academy & Literature* were either reviews of memoirs, biographical in format, or discussed the theme of life-writing. Through her regular acceptance of biography-based reviewing work, Woolf fashioned herself as something of a specialist in the genre. Her earliest essays followed the structure of most biographical reviews of the time by combining critical commentary with a substantial summary of the subject's life. An anonymous 1905 review of *John Graham of Claverhouse* by Charles Sanford Terry in the *Athenaeum*, for example, dedicates one third of the available space to describing the events of John Graham's life.²⁷ Similarly, Edith Sichel's 1905 review of *Matilda, Countess of Tuscany* by Mary E. Huddy in the *TLS* contains a large section of biographical fact.²⁸ However, Woolf's essays differed from those of her contemporaries due to her frequent embellishment of her biographical summaries.

²⁴ *JR*, 155.

²⁵ *Y*, 88.

²⁶ Leila Brosnan provides a comprehensive discussion of Woolf's development as a professional reviewer and literary journalist and the influence of editors, notably Richmond, on her style in Chapter 2 of *Reading Virginia Woolf's Essays and Journalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

²⁷ Review of *John Graham of Claverhouse*, by Charles Sandford Terry, *Athenaeum*, 15 April 1905, 456-457.

²⁸ Edith Sichel, 'Countess Matilda of Tuscany,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 March 1905, 80.

Woolf treated the memoirs, biographies or diaries that she reviewed as source material from which to compose her own life-writing. In ‘A Belle of the Fifties,’ for example, a review of the *Memoirs of Mrs. Clay, of Alabama* printed in the *Guardian* in 1905, Woolf’s critical commentary is upstaged by her energetic portrayals of Virginia Clay’s life in the American South during the Civil War. She describes the anecdotes and figures that interest her even if they are tangential to the main events of her subject’s life. Thus it is the ‘delightful “Lady” Crittenden’ rather than Clay who strikingly ‘appears before us, mountainous and stately, with her dress slipping from her “superbly moulded” shoulders and her skirt extended over a monster crinoline – a splendid monument of her time.’²⁹ The depiction of Lady Crittenden miraculously ‘appear[ing]’ from the memoir reflects Woolf’s critical judgement that this is a ‘most entertaining book,’ but her elaborate recreation of this figure also extends beyond Clay’s work to present an original biographical sketch.³⁰ Evidently, her priority here was to re-tell her subject’s life rather than to critique the version of it that she was reviewing. Woolf’s reviews often construct fresh portraits of the subjects whose memoirs and biographies she critiques, filtering the facts before her in a manner that opposes nineteenth-century biographical practices.

Victorian biography was shaped by what A. O. J. Cockshut has described as the nineteenth-century’s ‘universal trust in documents.’³¹ The authority of fact was so great in this period that aside from ‘omissions ... determined by general public standards of taste and reticence,’ Victorian biographers felt bound to include every detail of their subjects’ lives.³² Any public or private act that suggested virtuous moral, intellectual or professional conduct was deemed particularly important, Cockshut notes, as ‘the assumption remained that the fundamental reason for writing a man’s life was that he was admirable.’³³ This methodology produced a mass of lengthy, often rather pedantic works, the biographical equivalent of the three-volume Victorian novel, which have later been characterised with ‘the conventional image’ of Victorian biography as ‘the pair of black-bound, worshipful volumes crammed indiscriminately with heavily

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, ‘A Belle of the Fifties,’ in *E* 1, 19; internal quotations taken from the reviewed work.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

³¹ A. O. J. Cockshut, *Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Collins, 1974), 16.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

expurgated letters and diaries.’³⁴ The biographical approach Woolf adopts within her early reviews of memoirs both imitates and subverts these conventions of nineteenth-century life-writing. Her focus on descriptions of peripheral events and figures, particularly where she dwells on private moments, imitates the indulgent inclusiveness of Victorian memoirs. However, by pulling out, rehashing, and expanding details from the source text, Woolf’s biographical accounts revolt against the importance of documentary evidence. Her life-writing is as close to fiction as it is to history. Rather than worshipping the virtue or heroism of her subjects, Woolf often sidelines their public achievements and gently pokes fun at their private fears and preoccupations. Yet her portrayal of personal details is usually empathetic even if satiric.

Sympathetic association informs Woolf’s humorous depiction of Clay’s ‘first bitter sorrow’ when aged fourteen she ‘fell desperately in love with a hero, who proved to be already provided with wife and child, and for twelve or fourteen hours [...] went through agony and disappointment.’³⁵ Edith Sichel’s review of *Matilda, Countess of Tuscany*, in contrast, takes a much more impersonal and distanced approach to its subject. We learn that ‘Matilda was born in 1046 at the famous Tuscan Castle of Canossa,’ that she was a ‘close friend and protector of five successive Popes,’ ‘a successful agriculturalist’ and ‘the founder of a rare library,’ but we are not invited to imagine the Countess’s own experience of her life.³⁶ Writing of Countess Matilda’s fifteen year separation from her husband until ‘she travelled, amid incredible hardships, to console his last hours,’ Sichel does not include any speculation on the Countess’s feelings about the separation or her reaction to the death of her husband.³⁷ She does not explore what these unidentified hardships might have been. The incident is merely recalled to indicate that her subject endeavoured to be a dutiful wife. Sichel’s apparently objective stance mirrors the nineteenth-century’s ‘formal style of biographical writing which ... encouraged suppression of the author’s feelings.’³⁸ Woolf’s early biographical pieces differ in placing less stress on diligently recalling facts, and more emphasis on imagining the details of a subject’s life from their point-of-

³⁴ Joe Law and Linda K. Hughes, “‘And What Have *You* Done?’: Victorian Biography Today,’ in *Biographical Passages: Essays in Victorian and Modernist Biography*, ed. Joe Law and Linda K. Hughes (Columbia: Missouri University Press, 2000), 3.

³⁵ Woolf, ‘A Belle of the Fifties,’ 18.

³⁶ Sichel, ‘Countess Matilda of Tuscany,’ 80.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Cockshut, *Truth to Life*, 13.

view. Her approach reflects concerns which Woolf would voice in a biographical essay of 1932.

In the *Second Common Reader* version of “‘I am Christina Rossetti’” Woolf revealingly described the ‘old illusion’ of biography, a deceptive genre which presents:

the past and all its inhabitants miraculously sealed as in a magic tank; all we have to do is to look [...] and soon the little figures—for they are rather under life size—will begin to move and to speak, and as they move we shall arrange them in all sorts of patterns of which they were ignorant, for they thought when they were alive that they could go where they liked; and as they speak we shall read into their sayings all kinds of meaning which never struck them, for they believed when they were alive that they said straight off whatever came into their heads.³⁹

In retrospect, Woolf’s focus on animating her subjects in her early biographical reviews can be viewed as an attempt to undermine this illusion by conveying a sense of the potential flexibility of her subjects’ lives. Virginia Clay’s twelve to fourteen hours of agony and disappointment, for example, stem from the fact that at this moment she thought herself denied of a husband. By picking up on this detail, Woolf forcefully reminds the reader that her subject was not always the wife of Senator Clement Clay, for which she is known, but was once the young Virginia Tunstall whose life might have followed any number of paths. In the process of animating her subjects, however, Woolf also accentuates the illusion referred to in “‘I am Christina Rossetti’” by allowing her readers to see ‘the little figures’ of the past ‘begin to move and to speak.’ Fictionalising her subjects’ lives paradoxically sets them into the framework of a predetermined plot, while also combating this effect by indicating that her subjects experienced their life as free from any pattern. Throughout her early journalistic career Woolf experimented with different ways of depicting lives that would avoid the presentation of a static portrait. In 1909, she portrayed a nineteenth-century diplomat’s wife, Lady Clark, through reviewing her cookery book; in 1920, she used an imaginary conversation between two women to analyse the popularity of the Victorian memoir.⁴⁰ From her earliest reviews, therefore, we can see Woolf seeking innovative biographical methods to bring flexibility to her recording of lives.

³⁹ Virginia Woolf, “‘I am Christina Rossetti’,” in *E* 5, 554.

⁴⁰ Virginia Woolf, ‘A Cookery Book,’ in *E* 1, 301-303; Virginia Woolf, ‘A Talk About Memoirs,’ in *E* 3, 180-186.

Her innovative approach to biography is evident even in reviews for conservative publications. Woolf's opposition to the principles of Victorian biography is prominent in her 1908 contributions to the *Cornhill Magazine*, for example, a nineteenth-century literary periodical with a reputation for printing fictional instalments from prominent novelists and high-quality critical essays. At the beginning of the twentieth century the *Cornhill*'s editor, Reginald Smith, 'sought interesting, skilfully written articles and fiction by famous authors,' in order to 'recreate the quality and prestige of the earliest years of the magazine.'⁴¹ Smith presumably commissioned Woolf for her status as the daughter of Leslie Stephen, who had edited the magazine in its heyday before taking on his editorship of the *DNB*. Woolf contributed six signed pieces to the *Cornhill* for a series of reviews titled 'The Book on the Table,' which she shared with Lady Eleanor Cecil. One of Cecil's six articles focussed on biography, the rest discussed fiction. Woolf wrote all six of her articles on biographical works. At the time of Woolf's contributions, the occasional biographical article was a common feature of this monthly magazine. Each issue typically contained one life-writing piece, whether an obituary or a biographical sketch. These essays were usually signed, public statements based on personal recollections rather than reviews of biographical works; for example, Horace G. Hutchinson's 'short sketch of some aspects of the life of my friend, the late Sir Spencer Walpole' (1907).⁴² Woolf's empathetic life-writing reviews did not look out of place within the *Cornhill*, but her focus differed from that of the biographical sketches in contemporary issues. In 'Dorothea Beale,' Cecil focuses on the dates and events which would later prove to be of professional significance in the life of this pioneer of education:

At the age of thirteen [Beale] had already begun to teach, with herself as her first pupil. Four years later she was amongst those who listened to F. D. Maurice at the opening of Queen's College. In 1849 she became a mathematical tutor in the same college; in 1854, head-teacher.⁴³

In 'The Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt,' in contrast, Woolf offers no dates. She dwells on aspects of Bernhardt's life which had no relevance to her later career as an actress,

⁴¹ Barbara Quinn Schmidt, 'Cornhill Magazine,' in *British Literary Magazines: The Modern Age, 1914-1984*, ed. Alvin Sullivan (London: Greenwood Press, 1986), 103.

⁴² Horace G. Hutchinson, 'Sir Spencer Walpole,' *Cornhill Magazine*, September 1907, 325.

⁴³ Eleanor Cecil, 'Dorothea Beale,' *Cornhill Magazine*, November 1908, 649.

such as her childhood resolution to be a nun.⁴⁴ Woolf clearly sought to challenge the conservative, nineteenth-century values of the *Cornhill* through her unconventional treatment and choice of subjects.

Of the six figures Woolf wrote about for the *Cornhill*, four were women and two were men. These figures ranged from the orthodox subject of the American president, Theodore Roosevelt, about whom Woolf wrote at the 'command' of her editor, to the more controversial choice of Louise de La Vallière, mistress of Louis XIV of France.⁴⁵ Woolf mischievously noted in a letter how she 'dare[d] not tell' Smith she was writing about Louise de La Vallière 'lest he insist[ed] upon a study of Sir Henry Campbell.'⁴⁶ By writing about this second figure, Woolf distanced herself from her father's biographical practice even while she enjoyed the positive association of his reputation. In Stephen's opinion, a King's mistress would not be a suitable candidate for a *DNB* entry. Kay Ferres has calculated that within the *DNB* of Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee's editorship, 'Women comprise only about 3.5 per cent of its subjects.'⁴⁷ Through choosing women as the dominant subject of her *Cornhill* essays, Woolf thus conveyed her feminist determination to subvert the patriarchal cultural values advocated by her father's *DNB*.

Woolf's difficult relationship to her masculine literary inheritance, Briggs notes, is reflected in *Night and Day*.⁴⁸ Woolf's second novel, composed through 1916-1919, tellingly portrays Mrs Hilbery's struggle with her daughter to finish her father's biography. 'Mrs Hilbery is at once the model Victorian daughter, piously assembling and standing guard over her father's relics,' asserts Briggs, 'and the woman writer, questioning her culture's order of value and its inherited narratives.'⁴⁹ Like Mrs Hilbery, as a biographer, Woolf felt herself to be writing within an intellectual tradition whose cultural values she could not share. Woolf's distaste towards the patriarchal and nationalistic values exhibited by Stephen's *DNB* became increasingly politically-charged in the late 1910s with the outbreak of World War I. At 'a Queens Hall concert'

⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'The Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt,' in *E* 1, 165-166.

⁴⁵ *L* 1: 422.

⁴⁶ *L* 1: 436.

⁴⁷ Kay Ferres, 'Gender, Biography, and the Public Sphere,' in *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, ed. Peter France and William St Clair (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2002), 308.

⁴⁸ See Briggs, 'The Proper Writing of Lives,' 36-40.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

five months after the war's onset she found 'the patriotic sentiment [...] so revolting that [she] was nearly sick.'⁵⁰ A year later, on 23 January 1916, she described herself 'becom[ing] steadily more feminist' in reaction to 'the preposterous masculine fiction' of war.⁵¹ The war, and the jingoistic atmosphere this event engendered, solidified Woolf's feminist and pacifist convictions. In this context, the alternative values advocated by her early biographical writings can be seen as a feminist critique of culture. Woolf's interest in the lives of unusual or undervalued figures, many of whom were women, represents not just a rejection of the practices of the male, institutional biographer, typified by her father, but also a resolute resistance to the patriarchal, imperialist and nationalist sentiments which had shaped Victorian biography and which continued to mould the cultural values of contemporary British society.

Woolf's early life-writing can thus be read as a form of cultural criticism. Through her biographical journalism she appeals for a feminist reassessment of the many lives that British patriarchal culture has customarily deemed insignificant. Her biographical essays present a range of extraordinary and commonplace minor lives in order to redress the balance of previous biographical honours in favour of the rich, titled, famous, and male. In 'The Eccentrics' (1919), for instance, she celebrates the life of Lady Hester Stanhope, with 'her white horse perpetually in readiness for the Messiah,' and Margaret Fuller, who 'thought herself inspired, married an Italian footman, believed him a Marquis, and perished in a shipwreck off the American coast.'⁵² Woolf notes the dismissive attitude of the *DNB* to such subjects in her essay, suggesting that 'the world's estimate has been perverse from the start, and half her great men geese.'⁵³ An actress, a nun, a nurse, a court lady and a housewife are all equally worthy subjects in Woolf's opinion, and her articles build up a collection of female lives from a variety of backgrounds and historical periods. The lives that appear in Woolf's biographical writings were dictated to some extent by the recent publications that she had been asked to review. As a result, Woolf's biographical pieces contain a broad selection of wives, sisters, mistresses and associates of famous men, reflecting the frequent publication of letters, diaries and histories of such acquaintances of well-

⁵⁰ *L* 2: 57.

⁵¹ *L* 2: 76.

⁵² Virginia Woolf, 'The Eccentrics,' in *E* 3, 40.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 41.

known figures. Yet, her essays also include a large proportion of women who were exceptional in their own right, whether in the arts, sciences, politics, or within their limited sphere of the home. Her biographical journalism insists that no life is unworthy of record.

It is worth noting, however, that although the figures Woolf writes about in her early biographical pieces were often unusual or underestimated, they were not necessarily unknown. Critical focus on Woolf's interest in 'The Lives of Obscure,' caused by repeated reference to her use of this title for a group of biographical sketches in *The Common Reader: First Series*, seldom recognises that the majority of Woolf's biographical pieces began as a review of a contemporary publication. Elena Gualtieri's discussion of 'Woolf's continual fascination with the marginal and half-forgotten figures which people the history of English literature,' for example, omits to mention that these 'half-forgotten' figures had been rediscovered recently by the memoirs and biographies through which Woolf came into contact with their subjects.⁵⁴ Acknowledging that the figures Woolf presented in her essays may have been better known to contemporary readers than previously recognised does not alter her commitment to publicising marginal lives. Woolf nonetheless addressed publicly the inequality of contemporary cultural, literary and biographical histories through her journalism by demonstrating that her 'lesser' female biographical subjects could be just as interesting and important as the most prominent, influential, and celebrated male life. Her presentation of woman writers, Melba Cuddy-Keane observes, forcefully challenged contemporary assessments of women's writing 'by exposing existing criteria as inadequate to the texts.'⁵⁵ Admitting that Woolf's biographical subjects may have been familiar to her contemporary audience does not lessen the significance of these re-evaluations of women's writing or diminish her resistance to British society's patriarchal cultural values through her early biographical journalism.

Woolf's dissident choices and treatment of biographical subjects, her blurring of fact with fiction, and her prioritisation of women's lives in her early biographical journalism reveal an anti-authoritative, feminist approach to British culture's patriarchal

⁵⁴ Elena Gualtieri, *Virginia Woolf's Essays: Sketching the Past* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 122.

⁵⁵ Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 182.

values which remained central to her life-writing throughout her career and later characterised her cultural criticism. Literary criticism became a greater aspect of Woolf's journalism in the 1920s as her reputation as a critic and novelist grew, but she maintained her focus on unusual subjects even when the biographical material of a review was compressed to allow more room for literary analysis. In the course of this reviewing Woolf built up a catalogue of women's experiences and life-stories to draw on as she expanded her individual biographical pieces into feminist discussions of the social, political and economic inequalities that have historically disadvantaged women. Post-war, following the extension of the franchise in 1918 to include women over thirty who owned property, who were married to a man of property, or who had a university degree, Woolf began to use life-writing as a method of exploring the historical and continued disparity between the sexes, particularly with regard to financial circumstances and education.

Woolf's Collective Life of Women, 1920-1929

David Ellis describes 'feminist biography' as the process by which, within the account of one woman's life, the focus is 'moved away from the inner life towards the degree of the subject's representativeness.'⁵⁶ Ellis observes that this is a particular 'tendency' in 'lives of women by women,' where 'the interpretative framework is often strengthened by the way we are invited to pause from time to time and consider how the subject's life corresponded to the common patterns of women's lives in her time.'⁵⁷ This definition of feminist biography represents only one of many ways biography has been refashioned to reflect feminist concerns (often, in fact, building on Woolf's diverse methods as a biographer).⁵⁸ Ellis's description provides a useful starting point for considering Woolf's writing of women's lives, however, because it directly reflects a prominent aspect of her biographical approach. The following discussion will turn to Woolf's life-writing of the 1920s, focussing on a biographical review titled 'Two Women' and *A Room of One's Own*, a text that Lauren Rusk reads as an

⁵⁶ David Ellis, *Literary Lives: Biography and the Search for Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 169.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Ferres gives a useful overview of the different ways feminists have approached and redefined biography from the 1970s to 2000 with detailed reference to how these later trends have drawn on Woolf's biographical approaches; see Ferres, 'Gender, Biography, and the Public Sphere,' 306-319.

autobiographical exploration ‘of a collective life, that of women with the potential to write.’⁵⁹ Using biography as a springboard to feminist social criticism, these works extend the practices and themes of Woolf’s earlier biographical journalism to construct a collective history of women’s experience that outlines and critiques the cultural values, socialised gender roles and economic circumstances that have inhibited women’s access to education and the professions. This feminist social analysis of women’s collective experience contains the genesis of Woolf’s late cultural criticism.

From her earliest writings Woolf was interested in how the life of an individual might represent the collective life of a group or class of society. In a 1906 sketch, ‘Phyllis and Rosamond,’ she put forward the portrait of ‘a little group’ of sisters who might ‘epitomise the qualities of many.’⁶⁰ This rather clumsy, fictional exploration of the lives of two middle-class ‘daughters at home’ becomes an exploration of a longing in all middle-class women, not only Phyllis and Rosamond, for ‘freedom and friends and a house of our own.’⁶¹ In her early biographical reviews of women writers Woolf often re-evaluates her subject’s successes or failures within the context of the common experience of women living at that time. A 1911 essay on ‘The Duke and Duchess of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne’ asserts that Margaret Cavendish’s ‘active mind [...] was a dangerous possession if you were a woman and a Duchess and lived in the time of Charles the Second.’⁶² The *Common Reader* version of ‘The Duchess of Newcastle’ expanded this oblique reference to the social obstacles that restricted Cavendish with an analysis of the ‘censorious’ attitude she faced because ‘men were jealous of brains in a woman; women suspected intellect in their own sex.’⁶³ Through considering the broader issue of the power dynamics between men and women and between women and other women, Woolf’s critique of the difficulties faced by one individual intellectual woman in the seventeenth century evokes the difficulties facing intellectual women collectively in contemporary society.

Woolf’s most famous and extended use of feminist biography in the 1920s to analyse contemporary society occurs in *A Room of One’s Own*, where she supplies a

⁵⁹ Rusk, *The Life Writing of Otherness*, 15.

⁶⁰ Virginia Woolf, ‘Phyllis and Rosamond,’ in *HH*, 17.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 18, 28.

⁶² Virginia Woolf, ‘The Duke and Duchess of Newcastle,’ in *E* 1, 348.

⁶³ Virginia Woolf, ‘The Duchess of Newcastle,’ in *E* 4, 83.

collection of real and imaginary lives to illustrate the socio-economic conditions that have shaped the current state of women's writing. This extended essay, based on the 'Women and Fiction' lectures Woolf delivered to women undergraduates at Cambridge's Newham and Girton colleges in October 1928, was first drafted as a book-length polemic in March 1929, a year after the 1928 Representation of the People Act had granted women over the age of twenty-one equal voting rights with men. '*A Room ...* is usually read in isolation, as one of the founding documents of the women's movement,' Briggs notes, '[yet] it can be read as "the last in a long series of women's suffrage pamphlets, despite the fact that it survives ... and the others do not"'.⁶⁴ Woolf's text reflects disputes raging through the Women's Movement in the mid-1920s between 'new' and 'old' feminists:

The 'old' feminists represented an aspiring and predominantly middle-class group, campaigning for equal treatment for women in education and the professions. The 'new' feminists, on the other hand, believed that the key reforms had already been achieved, and instead focussed their efforts on 'women's issues' – contraception, state support for widows and unmarried mothers, and a 'family allowance.' ... Woolf's exploration of equality and difference in *A Room* is thus rooted in contemporary debate. Her emphasis on women's education and the need for independence, money and 'a room of one's own' reflects her sympathy with 'old' feminism, while her focus on women's poverty and the burden of child-bearing points towards 'new' feminism.⁶⁵

Viewed within this historical context, Woolf's negotiations of gender equality and difference in her life-writing can similarly be seen to interact with contemporary feminist debate. The appearance of these concerns in Woolf's 1920s biographical journalism, notably within 'Two Women,' an important pre-text for *A Room of One's Own*, discloses the extent to which Woolf's feminist thinking in her influential 1929 pamphlet had been evolving throughout the 1920s and was partly inspired by her reading and writing of women's lives.

'Two Women,' first published in the *Nation & Athenaeum* on 23 April 1927, demonstrates Woolf's willingness to manipulate individual biographical accounts in order to present a collective portrait of women's struggle to overcome their historically

⁶⁴ Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Penguin, 2006), 221-222; internal quotation taken from Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf, Cambridge and A Room of One's Own: 'The Proper Upkeep of Names'* (London: Cecil Woolf, 1996), 49.

⁶⁵ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, 222.

oppressed position within patriarchal Britain. The essay was written as a review of two contemporary biographical works; *Emily Davies and Girton College* by Barbara Stephen, and the *Letters of Lady Augusta Stanley*.⁶⁶ Woolf made only one reference at the time to 'writing about' Davies and Stanley in a letter to Vita Sackville-West on 6 March 1927.⁶⁷ When working on her speeches for Newnham and Girton in October 1928, however, she recalled her earlier reading of Barbara Stephen's work and wrote to her friend Margaret Llewelyn Davies, Emily Davies's niece, to ask: 'Could you lend me a copy of your Aunt's life, for my lecture?'⁶⁸ Then in 1931, when filling scrapbooks with source material for her envisaged sequel to *A Room of One's Own*, later to become *Three Guineas*, Woolf included a copy of 'Two Women' in the first volume.⁶⁹ More than a review, 'Two Women' contains a sustained enquiry into the historical oppression of middle-class women in which Woolf draws on Emily Davies's conviction that women lack money, time, privacy and education to construct an analysis of why women rarely excel outside the domestic sphere. This argument, and the language in which it is couched, closely anticipate Woolf's later investigations into the socio-economic obstacles that have stifled women writers.

Emily Davies and Girton College presents a history of Emily Davies, a middle-class suffragist and ardent campaigner for women's education and independence born in 1830. Its author, Barbara Stephen, was the wife of Woolf's cousin, Sir Henry Lushington Stephen. Stephen's one-volume biography focuses on Davies's public achievements: her involvement in the campaign for women's suffrage, the London School Board, and the foundation of Cambridge University's first women's college in the 1870s. Woolf continues the admiring tone Stephen uses in her biography. The first portion of her essay describes 'the instincts and prejudices, tough as roots but intangible as mist' against which Davies had to fight to raise money and support for a female college.⁷⁰ Woolf avoids adopting an overtly reverential attitude to Davies, however, by

⁶⁶ Barbara Stephen, *Emily Davies and Girton College* (London: Constable & Co, 1927); Augusta Stanley, *Letters of Lady Augusta Stanley. A Young Lady at Court 1849-1863*, ed. Albert Baillie and Hector Bolitho (London: Gerald Howe, 1927).

⁶⁷ L 3: 343.

⁶⁸ L 3: 544.

⁶⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 3 Vols., 1: 27; available in *The Three Guineas Scrapbooks: A Digital Archive*, ed. Vara Neverow and Merry M. Pawlowski [Web site and database] (California State University, 2001); available from <<http://www.csub.edu/woolf>>; accessed 6 May 2010.

⁷⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'Two Women,' in E 4, 421.

portraying her as ‘combative, argumentative’ and ‘consumed with an abstract passion for injustice to women which burnt up trivial personalities and made her a little intolerant of social frivolities.’⁷¹ Even while praising ‘her determination to reform the education of women,’ Woolf simultaneously pokes fun at the ‘decidedly austere,’ ‘indomitable Miss Davies’ with her horror of luxuries.⁷²

Woolf’s depiction of her second subject, in contrast, is decidedly irreverent. The *Letters of Lady Augusta Stanley: A Young Lady at Court* present two volumes of correspondence from a young lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria’s mother, the Duchess of Kent, written between 1849 and 1863. Edited by her nephew, the work begins with a sentimental introductory description of how ‘in managing their mother’s evenings’ in their Paris drawing-room, Lady Augusta and her sisters ‘learnt that *talent de Société* which made them such remarkable hostesses afterwards in their own homes.’⁷³ Woolf’s rewriting of this section in her article is less than respectful. The hyperbolic language with which she describes how Stanley was ‘trained’ to possess ‘that abounding sensibility, that unquenchable sympathy which were to be so lavishly drawn upon in after years’ gently mocks such tea-table training and the self-sacrificing qualities it installs.⁷⁴ In the second half of her article, Woolf highlights the banality of the ‘domestic details’ that would later occupy Stanley’s daily life amongst the royal family.⁷⁵ She humorously summarises the effusive and uninspiring content of Stanley’s *Letters* with an abrupt catalogue of occurrences:

They drove out and she thought how charming the village children looked. They walked and the Duchess picked heather. They came home and the Duchess was tired. [...] Princess Ada fell from her pony. Prince Leo was naughty. The Beloved Duchess wanted a green umbrella. The measles had come out, but, alas, they threatened to go in again.⁷⁶

As she revels in parodying Stanley’s exaggerated style, Woolf conversely conveys her private enjoyment of ‘Lady Augusta’s power to magnify the common and illumine the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 422.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 422-424.

⁷³ Albert Baillie, introduction to *Letters of Lady Augusta Stanley*, 10 (emphasis in original).

⁷⁴ Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 422-423.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

dull.⁷⁷ Nonetheless she concludes that ‘as one studies the lives of the two women side by side, one cannot doubt that Miss Davies got more interest, more pleasure, and more use out of one month of her life than Lady Augusta out of a whole year of hers.’⁷⁸ The format of Woolf’s review initially places her two female subjects and their works in complete opposition. While Davies is ‘perhaps [...] a little deficient in feminine charm,’ ‘Lady Augusta’s charm’ is her defining feature.⁷⁹ Yet ‘Two Women’ begins not with Emily Davies or Augusta Stanley, but with an examination of the historical anonymity of middle-class women. Woolf uses her biographical review as a springboard to discuss the relative obscurity of women’s lives within nineteenth-century patriarchal society.

At the beginning of ‘Two Women’ Woolf observes that although ‘the middle class is the great reservoir from which we draw our distinguished men it has thrown up singularly few women to set beside them.’⁸⁰ Many of the obstacles to women’s public achievement identified in this article foreshadow those she would argue women must overcome to write fiction in *A Room of One’s Own*. Her speculation that ‘the age at which [women] married, the number of children they bore, the privacy they lacked, the incomes they had not, the conventions which stifled them, and the education they never received’ might all be responsible for the suppression of nineteenth-century middle-class women anticipates Woolf’s conviction in Chapter III of *A Room of One’s Own* that the reason ‘no [Elizabethan] woman wrote a word of extraordinary literature’ could be found by examining ‘the conditions in which women lived’ in the time of Shakespeare.⁸¹ ‘What one wants,’ Woolf muses in *A Room*, is ‘a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself.’⁸² Describing Emily Davies’s campaigns for women’s education in ‘Two Women,’ Woolf highlights how Davies’s work was made difficult by a widely-held ‘belief in the inferiority of women,’ the fact that nineteenth-century ‘middle-class parents [...] could afford to educate their sons but not their daughters,’ and the domestic arrangements of the Victorian household which left women with ‘little

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 423-424.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 422-424.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁸¹ Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 419; *AROO*, 53.

⁸² *AROO*, 58.

time to themselves and no money of their own.’⁸³ This direct correspondence in language and argument between ‘Two Women’ and *A Room* indicates their close relationship within the context of the life-long development of Woolf’s cultural criticism.

Throughout her career Woolf had experimented with different ways to express her belief that women are restricted by a lack of privacy and freedom from domestic duties. Her 1903 depiction of ‘a gypsy cart’ as a house that ‘is rooted to no one spot but can travel as quickly as you can change your mind’ represents,⁸⁴ as Alison Light has astutely recognised, ‘an early version of ... [that] well-known image of the psychological as well as literal space which [Woolf] felt a woman needed in order to write.’⁸⁵ Phyllis and Rosamond’s desire for ‘a house of [their] own’ in Woolf’s 1906 fictional sketch similarly represents an early articulation of Woolf’s sense of women’s need for both financial and psychological freedom.⁸⁶ These early musings gradually built into a sustained interest in the socio-economic factors that have restricted women’s entry into public life and the professions, which directed the focus of much of Woolf’s reading and writing later in her career and emerged as a prominent theme in her critical and fictional works from the late-1920s.

Briggs describes *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando* and *A Room of One’s Own* as ‘a triptych’ through which Woolf investigates the ‘patriarchal assumptions and institutions ... [which] discourage the woman artist.’⁸⁷ This analysis can be extended to include ‘Two Women’ if Woolf is seen as investigating not just how the social climate affects the woman artist but how it affects all women. When writing ‘Two Women,’ a task Woolf began only two months after finishing *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf quoted a passage from Emily Davies’s paper on ‘Special Systems of Education for Women’ (1868) that outlines the difficulties faced by women ‘who have laboured under [...] the weight of discouragement produced by being perpetually told that, as women, nothing

⁸³ Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 419-420.

⁸⁴ Virginia Woolf, ‘Wilton Fair,’ in *PA*, 208.

⁸⁵ Alison Light, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants: The Hidden Heart of Domestic Service* (London: Fig Tree, 2007), 42.

⁸⁶ Woolf, ‘Phyllis and Rosamond,’ 28.

⁸⁷ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, 216.

much is ever expected of them.’⁸⁸ Woolf’s description of the destructive effect of what she calls ‘negative education’⁸⁹ on women in this review echoes her portrayal of the harmful impact of Charles Tansley’s negative attitude towards women in *To the Lighthouse* which leaves Lily Briscoe ‘murmur[ing] monotonously’: ‘Can’t paint, can’t write.’⁹⁰ With its comparison of a progressive, younger woman and an aristocratic ‘woman of the old type,’⁹¹ ‘Two Women’ is an important midway text in the development of Woolf’s feminist cultural analysis, linking back to her early expressions of longing for a new life for ‘the daughters at home,’⁹² paralleling her contemporaneous juxtaposition of Lily and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, and anticipating the wider-reaching feminist history of *A Room of One’s Own*. Read together these four texts indicate Woolf’s increased concern in the late 1920s with unravelling the diverse ways in which women’s lives had changed over the course of the last generation.

When revisiting *Emily Davies and Girton College* as a source text for *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf returned to those sections of the book she had quoted in her earlier review. Davies’s preoccupation with ‘rooms—always more and more rooms to house those unhappy girls dreaming their youth away [...] picking up a little knowledge in the family sitting-room’ is a central idea from Stephen’s work and evidently resonated with Woolf as she dedicates a paragraph to it in ‘Two Women.’⁹³ Two years later in *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf again evoked this section of *Emily Davies and Girton College* when suggesting that the reason previous women writers have almost exclusively written novels might have ‘something to do with [...] the fact, which Miss Emily Davies [...] was so strikingly to demonstrate, that the middle-class family in the early nineteenth century was possessed only of a single sitting-room between them.’⁹⁴ The vague list of actions and events Mary Seton recites when describing the foundation of her college in Chapter I of *A Room* draws on Woolf’s portrayal of Davies’s campaigning activities in the first half of ‘Two Women.’ The question of ‘find[ing] a pretty girl to sit in the front row’ thus recalls Woolf’s earlier reference to “Three lovely

⁸⁸ Quoted in Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 419. Woolf despondently recorded ‘the end’ of *To the Lighthouse* on 14 January 1927 (*D* 3: 123). By 8 March 1927, she was working on ‘Two Women’ (see *L* 3: 343).

⁸⁹ Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 419.

⁹⁰ *TTL*, 173.

⁹¹ Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 424.

⁹² Woolf, ‘Phyllis and Rosamond,’ 18.

⁹³ Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 422.

⁹⁴ *AROO*, 86.

girls” [being] placed conspicuously in the front row at a meeting’ so that ‘the male eye might be gratified and deceived.’⁹⁵ ‘The *Saturday Review* has been very rude’ alludes to an article detailed in Stephen’s history and referred to in ‘Two Women,’ in which the author declared that it would be ‘next to impossible to persuade the world that a pretty first-class woman came by her honours fairly.’⁹⁶ The curious feature of Woolf’s use of Stephen’s biography in this paragraph of *A Room*, however, is that much of her material alludes to Chapter VII of Stephen’s work which deals primarily with ‘Women’s Suffrage and the London School Board.’ Only a quotation included in a footnote towards the end of Mary Seton’s monologue in *A Room* is taken from later in Stephen’s work when Davies is involved in founding Girton college and learns they need ‘£30,000 at least.’⁹⁷ The sections of Stephen’s biography that Woolf uses within the full-text of *A Room* are those she was familiar with from writing ‘Two Women,’ even though these are not strictly relevant to her topic. On closer examination, this misleading use of her source material reveals that Woolf had purposefully manipulated this text in her initial review in order to strengthen her implied feminist argument about the importance of women’s education.

‘Two Women’ transfers smoothly from Emily Davies to a description of Augusta Stanley’s contrasting values, upbringing and social circle through alluding to an episode in Chapter VII of Barbara Stephen’s biography in which Davies first ‘go[es] among the aristocracy’ in search of fellow campaigners for women’s suffrage.⁹⁸ A letter is quoted from Davies to her friend Miss Manning in which she wrote: ‘I felt directly that if I went to Lady Stanley’s again, I must get a new bonnet. And is it well to spend one’s money in bonnets and frys instead of on instructive books?’⁹⁹ This quotation allows Woolf to emphasise Davies’s distaste for luxuries and provides a link between her biographical accounts of the two figures. Davies’s concentration of all her effort, time and money on the cause of women’s liberation highlights the banality of Stanley’s complete absorption in the activities of a royal household in which ‘[n]othing whatever happened.’¹⁰⁰ In her final paragraph, Woolf refers to this section of Stephen’s

⁹⁵ *AROO*, 25; Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 421.

⁹⁶ *AROO*, 25; Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 421.

⁹⁷ *AROO*, 26; Stephen, *Davies and Girton College*, 150-151.

⁹⁸ Woolf, ‘Two Women,’ 422.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 423.

biography again as she attempts to save Augusta Stanley and her life at court from ridicule with the hesitant suggestion that ‘Lady Augusta at any rate seems to have got wind of other possibilities.’¹⁰¹ Returning to her allusion to the meeting between the two women, Woolf reveals that ‘she was one of the first to support Miss Davies in her demand for a University education for women.’¹⁰² Having shown Stanley to have extended her interests beyond the domestic sphere, Woolf then wonders if Emily Davies might have made a corresponding concession to social concerns by ‘sacrific[ing] her book and buy[ing] her bonnet.’¹⁰³ Her essay closes with the suggestion that these two women, ‘so different in every other way,’ might have ‘come together over this—the education of their sex.’¹⁰⁴ Yet the ‘Lady Stanley’ that Davies visited was not Lady Augusta Stanley but her sister-in-law, Lady Henrietta Stanley of Alderley; a prominent suffragist and leading member of the Women’s Liberal-Unionist Association who was much more actively involved in the fight for women’s education than the Lady Stanley of the *Letters* Woolf was reviewing. Although Augusta Stanley later became a supporter of Girton College, and was present at the meeting alluded to in ‘Two Women’ (as indicated by a reference to the additional presence of ‘Dean Stanley and Lady Augusta’ in the paragraph from which Woolf quotes extensively), the discussion between Henrietta Stanley and Emily Davies on this occasion was of suffrage not of education and it was not for Augusta Stanley that Emily Davies felt she must buy a new hat.¹⁰⁵

Taking the quotation from Emily Davies’s letter out of context provides Woolf with a neat link between her two subjects as well as giving the impression that Lady Augusta commanded greater aristocratic influence than she did. Just as Woolf fictionalised her descriptions of her subjects in her early biographical reviews to better represent their inner lives, here she blurs the facts of her source texts with a little fiction in order to better depict the importance of education to the collective life of women. Presenting Augusta Stanley as intimidating to Davies strengthens her depiction of Stanley as ‘the finest flower’ of her ‘little class,’ which in turn strengthens her portrayal

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 424.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Stephen, *Davies and Girton College*, 110.

of the two women as social opposites.¹⁰⁶ The suggestion that women from entirely different backgrounds might be united by the belief in the need for women's education is crucial to Woolf's implied claim in this essay that women still needed to campaign for equal access to education, particularly within the universities. Her depiction of the encounter between Emily Davies and Augusta Stanley at the residence of Henrietta Stanley of Alderley contains an element of truth which perhaps explains why the 'mistake' has not been obvious to her subsequent editors.¹⁰⁷ Considering her knowledge of Augusta Stanley from reading her letters, however, Woolf's synthesis of the two sisters-in-law is unlikely to have been unconscious. Her distortion of biographical evidence indicates that her first priority in writing this review was not to provide a faithful representation of her sources but to discuss her interest in the history of women's education. Woolf's mendacious reading of *Emily Davies and Girton College* and the *Letters of Augusta Stanley* in 'Two Women' is thus paradoxically motivated by a desire to tell the truth about women's lives and concerns. While maintaining respect for the internal truth of both women's experience of life, Woolf's tweaks the external truth of events to depict the continuing importance of education for women as a means to achieve financial and psychological independence.

Woolf's final allusion in 'Two Women' to 'some astonishing phoenix of the future' springing 'from that union of the middle-class woman and the court lady' brings her discussion of women's education into the present tense and lends the subject contemporary significance.¹⁰⁸ This prophetic ending foreshadows in style and content the final lines of Woolf's article version of *A Room of One's Own*, 'Women and Fiction,' in which her narrator concludes by 'looking ahead to that golden, that perhaps fabulous, age when women will have what has long been denied them—leisure, and money, and a room to themselves.'¹⁰⁹ We can clearly see that writing 'Two Women' influenced Woolf's conception of *A Room of One's Own*, shaping the language and documentary evidence through which she developed her feminist argument in this text. *A Room* draws extensively not only on 'Two Women,' however, but also on the vast

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, 'Two Women,' 422.

¹⁰⁷ In McNeillie's *Essays of Virginia Woolf* an editorial note to this episode erroneously draws on Barbara Stephen's description of Henrietta Stanley in her 'Biographical Index' to describe Augusta Stanley, fusing the two women's names together to create 'Lady Augusta Stanley of Alderley'; see *E* 4, 425.

¹⁰⁸ Woolf, 'Two Women,' 424.

¹⁰⁹ Virginia Woolf, 'Women and Fiction,' in *E* 5, 35.

amount of feminist thinking generated by Woolf's previous reviewing of and writing about women's lives. While 'it was not unusual for a critic to write seriously about Jane Austen, the Brontës, and George Eliot,' Alex Zwerdling reflects, 'the unprecedented element in Woolf's approach [in *A Room*] was to see these major writers in relation not to the major male writers of their own time but rather in relation to their less successful sisters.'¹¹⁰ This original aspect of Woolf's feminist pamphlet relied on her prior research into women's lives. Using the knowledge she had gained via her biographical reviewing, Woolf expanded her discussion of well-known women writers in *A Room of One's Own* into a cultural history of women's collective experience through the preceding centuries.

'Charged with the task of converting the fragmentary traces of women's existence into a story without gaps,' Gualtieri observes, in *A Room of One's Own* 'fiction is used by Woolf as a sort of alternative version of the historical truth which is rooted in the imagination rather than in facts.'¹¹¹ Building on the blending of fact with imagination in her early biographical reviews, Woolf creates fictional lives to fill the gaps in her history of women writers thus 'challeng[ing] received notions about the nature and definition of historical facts and narratives.'¹¹² By telling the invented life of Judith Shakespeare, for example, how she was denied education and occupied with domestic tasks, betrothed to a neighbour's son when it was 'hateful to her' and refused entry to the theatre although she 'had a taste' for it, Woolf supplements and humanises the few facts her narrator has collected from Trevelyan's *History of England* about 'the life of the average Elizabethan woman' to present an emotive portrait of the likely fate of a gifted woman in the time of Shakespeare.¹¹³ Mary Carmichael and her insignificantly titled book ('*Life's Adventure*, or some such') similarly serve as an invented focus through which the narrator can critique the collective position of modern women's fiction.¹¹⁴ As she owns that *Life's Adventure* shows more potential than achievement, Woolf's use of the pronouns 'her' and 'she' shifts to refer not only to 'Mary Carmichael' in the singular, but to all women writers:

¹¹⁰ Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (California: University of California Press, 1986), 226.

¹¹¹ Gualtieri, *Woolf's Essays: Sketching the Past*, 127-128.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 128.

¹¹³ *AROO*, 58-62; Woolf here refers to G. M. Trevelyan, *History of England* (London: Longmans, 1926).

¹¹⁴ *AROO*, 103-104.

Give her another hundred years, I concluded, reading the last chapter [...] give her a room of her own and five hundred a year, let her speak her mind and leave out half that she now puts in, and she will write a better book one of these days. She will be a poet, I said, putting *Life's Adventure*, by Mary Carmichael, at the end of the shelf, in another hundred years' time.¹¹⁵

This conclusion neatly foreshadows the final paragraph of *A Room of One's Own* in which Woolf restates her argument that women writers must secure financial and psychological freedom for themselves and their successors before we can expect the rebirth of Shakespeare's sister. She lays responsibility on all of her readers for the future of women's fiction by including them within 'the common life which is the real life' rather than 'the little separate lives which we live as individuals.'¹¹⁶ 'I' is of little consequence in *A Room*, as Woolf relentlessly draws her readers into a collective 'we.'

Reviewing *A Room of One's Own* for the *Listener* on 6 November 1921, Vita Sackville-West praised Woolf's discussion not only of 'women who write' but also of 'women in general.'¹¹⁷ In this subversively polemical text Woolf pushed her method of collectivist feminist biography to its extreme, portraying individual lives as representative of women's shared experience and constructing fictionalised lives of imagined sociological models to better convey her sense of the historically disadvantaged position that women have collectively occupied, and continue to occupy, within British patriarchal culture. Woolf's attempts to establish a tradition for women writers in *A Room of One's Own*, and to discuss the economic and intellectual obstacles that continually affect women writers, led her to suggest the existence of a shared female experience of life that connects women across the centuries. This collective analysis of 'women in general' contains the genesis of Woolf's cultural criticism and owes much to the egalitarian outlook of 'old' feminism, with its emphasis on women's need for equal opportunities in education and the professions. *A Room of One's Own* obscures the differences between women; class difference, for example, earlier highlighted in 'Two Women,' is played down rather than flagged up in her 1929 pamphlet. Moving into the 1930s, however, Woolf's feminist analysis of culture

¹¹⁵ *AROO*, 123.

¹¹⁶ *AROO*, 148-149.

¹¹⁷ Vita Sackville-West, Review of *A Room of One's Own*, *Listener*, 6 November 1921, 620; quoted in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin (London: Routledge, 1975), 258.

exhibits a great sensitivity to ‘new’ feminism’s interest in gender difference and the issues facing particular groups of women. As her output became increasingly socially alert in response to the onset of the Great Depression and the resultant leftist trend in British literature, Woolf’s biographical writings concerning women and her wider feminist criticism pay closer attention to the differences in class and culture that cut across gender. Faced with the task of introducing *Life As We Have Known It*, Woolf resisted drawing the volume’s working women writers into the collective tradition of literary women she had presented in *A Room of One’s Own*, choosing instead to stress the lack of common experience shared between the middle classes and the book’s labouring-class subjects.

Writing Difference: *Life As We Have Known It*

Life As We Have Known It, an anthology of autobiographical recollections written by members of the Women’s Co-operative Guild, was published by the Hogarth Press in March 1931. Compiled and edited by Margaret Llewelyn Davies, niece of Emily Davies, the collection included a preface from Woolf. Despite championing the volume’s publication, Woolf was reluctant to introduce it. Writing to Davies on 6 June 1929 she wrote she was ‘rather doubtful about doing a preface.’¹¹⁸ Having completed a first draft on 25 July 1930 she entreated; ‘I have a strong feeling against introductions—and this one is full of difficulties.’¹¹⁹ Two days later Woolf informed Davies that she had offered a revised version of the essay to the *Yale Review* after ‘scrapp[ing] all names and otherwise abolish[ing] traces of the book.’¹²⁰ The title of Woolf’s essay in this scholarly, American literary quarterly – ‘Memories of a Working Women’s Guild’ – was suggested by the then managing editor, Helen McAfee.¹²¹ While the essay was published in America in September 1930, back in Britain Woolf was once more reworking her introduction in response to objections from Davies and the Guildswomen whose articles appeared in *Life As We Have Known It*. As late as 1 February 1931, Woolf talks again of having ‘change[d] the tone of some of the

¹¹⁸ L 4: 65.

¹¹⁹ L 4: 191.

¹²⁰ L 4: 192.

¹²¹ In a letter to McAfee on 27 July 1930 Woolf wrote ‘I think your suggestion of a title is very good and have adopted it’ (L 4: 193).

sentences' and suggests to Davies that '[p]erhaps we may meet and have a final revision' after 'I get my final proofs.'¹²² Published in two versions and rewritten several times in collaboration with the suggestions of multiple readers/editors, this essay proved to be a far more substantial and demanding undertaking than her regular journalistic essays. Woolf's 'Introductory Letter' to *Life As We Have Known It* and 'Memories of a Working Women's Guild' have proved equally challenging to Woolf's critics due to her narrator's ambivalent portrayal of the women Co-operative members in both versions of the text and her apparently naive insistence in this essay on the completely separate experience of middle-class and labouring-class women.

Writing in 1988, Jane Marcus described Woolf's preface to *Life As We Have Known It* as a careful discussion of 'the relation of class to art' and a significant contribution to 'the propaganda of hope.'¹²³ The *Yale Review* version of the essay may be 'narrated in the voice of an "irritable" middle-class visitor,' Marcus acknowledges, but, she contends, this cynicism was omitted from the *Life As We Have Known It* version to create a text which is 'both more politically committed to the cooperative cause and more artistically Woolfian.'¹²⁴ Marcus portrays 'Memories of a Working Women's Guild' as 'the unrevised first draft' of the 'Introductory Letter' to *Life As We Have Known It*, in which Woolf would 'clarify her opinions ... with the help of Margaret Llewelyn Davies and the working women writers.'¹²⁵ The two published essays might more accurately be described as two revised versions of a shared draft. Each text was revised in a different direction according to external influences: the *Yale Review* required 'various alterations' to make the essay 'quite plain' to its American readers; the 'Introductory Letter' had to be altered in response to Davies's feeling that the first version 'would give pain and be misunderstood' by the women it describes.¹²⁶ Rather than 'Woolf's own best version' then, the second incarnation of the essay was adjusted to admit the opinions of others until it became, as Marcus herself notes, 'a cooperative venture.'¹²⁷ This process discouraged Woolf who, while anxious to avoid

¹²² L 4: 287.

¹²³ Jane Marcus, "'No More Horses": Virginia Woolf on Art and Propaganda,' in *Art & Anger: Reading Like a Woman* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 118-119.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹²⁶ L 4: 193; L 4: 212-213.

¹²⁷ Marcus, "'No More Horses",' 265, n 15.

offending the book's contributors, was frustrated by what she saw as the 'vanity' and 'terrific conventionality of the workers.'¹²⁸ On 10 October 1930 she wrote to Davies:

I am very pleased that Mrs Barton on the whole approves—at the same time I'm amused at the importance attached to the size of the Guilders. [...] If they cant [*sic*] face the fact that Lilian [Harris] smokes a pipe and reads detective novels, and cant [*sic*] be told that they weigh on an average 12 stone—which is largely because they scrub so hard and have so many children—and are shocked by the word 'impure' how can you say that they face 'reality'?¹²⁹

If the second version of the essay is, as Marcus maintains, more determinedly political and sympathetic to her labouring-class subjects than 'Memories of a Working Women's Guild' this change cannot wholly be attributed to Woolf. Recent critics have queried, however, the extent to which the second essay really differs from the first. 'Though Virginia toned down her first version ... these were mere tinkering,' Alison Light asserted in 2007: 'The overall drift remained the same.'¹³⁰ Stuart N. Clarke observed in 2009 that while Woolf 'made some concessions' in her preface, including 'some corrections [which] are pretty obviously Davies's ... she kept the working women's "thick-set and muscular" bodies.'¹³¹

Critics continue to find Woolf's 'Introductory Letter' problematic. Mary Childers identifies 'expressions of discomfort amounting to distaste' in Woolf's survey of 'women whose lives are so restricted by material circumstances that they do not inspire elegant prose.'¹³² Woolf's reluctance to acknowledge 'that there is a power relation between women employers and their women servants,' Childers argues, results in a failure to consider how both classes of women are part of 'a hierarchical system in which differences connect people through conflict that considerably modifies similarities produced by gender.'¹³³ Light is equally troubled by Woolf's introduction; she characterises the essay as 'impressively honest and uneasy' but finds Woolf's notion that the sympathy middle-class women feel towards poorer women is 'bound to

¹²⁸ L 4: 228.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Light, *Woolf and the Servants*, 205.

¹³¹ Stuart N. Clarke, "'A Few Cigarettes in Lilian's Ash Tray': Woolf's Revisions to her Essays," *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* 30 (2009): 17.

¹³² Mary Childers, 'Virginia Woolf on the Outside Looking Down: Reflections on the Class of Women,' *Modern Fiction Studies* 38: 1 (1992): 62.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 67.

be “fictitious” ... an odd thing for a writer to say.’¹³⁴ ‘In her drafts of *The Waves*,’ she notes, ‘[Woolf] was concurrently imagining the lives of three different men—one homosexual—relying, presumably, on aesthetic sympathy.’¹³⁵ Light’s observation highlights the incongruent limits of Woolf’s aesthetic sympathy, but also, perhaps unwittingly, suggests the essentialist assumption that, as a woman, Woolf must have at least as much in common with labouring-class women as with middle-class men despite the fact that her shared social experience might lead her to empathise more easily with an individual from her own class, regardless of gender, than with an individual of the same gender who has been shaped by vastly different social circumstances. Without disregarding the class prejudice Woolf exhibits in this essay, to which the following discussion will endeavour to remain sensitive, my reading of this text suggests that the emphasis Woolf’s narrator places on the difficulty of relating to the co-operative women writers indicates a willingness to confront social inequality and difference which, as Childers contends, might profitably ‘help us focus on the persistent obstacles to feminist theorizing of the intersections of class, gender, and culture.’¹³⁶ As well as signalling Woolf’s anxieties about writing about labouring-class culture from her middle-class viewpoint, this essay also discloses the history of Woolf’s long-term relationship with the Women’s Co-operative Guild and the roots of her later preoccupation with the difficulty of traversing class boundaries in her cultural criticism.

The Women’s Co-operative Guild was first established in the early-1880s, as G. D. H. Cole notes, because it began ‘to be seen as a particular anomaly that women, the housekeepers and shoppers of the nation, should allow the great Consumers’ Co-operative Movement to be run exclusively by men.’¹³⁷ In 1883, Alice Acland, wife of the Liberal leader, Arthur Acland, highlighted this inequality in a letter to the *Co-operative News*:

What are men always urged to do when there is a meeting held at any place to encourage or to start Co-operative institutions? Come! Help! Vote! Criticise! Act! What are women urged to do? Come and *Buy*! That is the limit of the

¹³⁴ Light, *Woolf and the Servants*, 204.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Childers, ‘Woolf on the Outside Looking Down,’ 63.

¹³⁷ G. D. H. Cole, *A Century of Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1944), 215-216.

special work pointed out to us women. ... Why should not we have our meetings, our readings, our discussions?¹³⁸

The Women's Co-operative Guild was founded later that year in order to give 'married working-women' just this opportunity to 'come together' at local 'Branch' meetings where they might discuss 'their common everyday interests as buyers.'¹³⁹ With the appointment of Margaret Llewelyn Davies as secretary in 1889 the Guild's activities expanded further. Cole credits Davies with having transformed this initially small agent for Co-operative propaganda into 'a really powerful progressive force.'¹⁴⁰ Under Davies's leadership, Guild members began to debate and to campaign at the male dominated Co-operative Movement Quarterly Meetings on issues such as the school leaving-age, the minimum wage, and the extension of suffrage. When the Woolfs first came into contact with the Guild in 1912-1913, Leonard Woolf recorded in 1964, 'it had a membership of about 30,000 and its objects were "to educate its members, advance co-operative principles, and to obtain for women's interests the recognition which within and without the movement is due to them".'¹⁴¹

The Woolfs became involved with Co-operative politics shortly before their marriage in 1912 after Virginia introduced Leonard to Davies, a family friend of the Stephens, early in the summer of that year. 'Impressed by her enthusiasm,' Leonard later recalled how after meeting Davies he 'embarked on a thorough study of the [Co-operative] movement, both its principles and its practice ... [which] completed my conversion to socialism.'¹⁴² Retrospectively, the establishment of Leonard Woolf's acquaintance with Davies can be seen as a pivotal moment in the expansion of his liberal political views and his development as a socialist journalist. At the time of the Woolfs' marriage on the 10 August 1912, Leonard's first series of articles on Co-operative subjects were appearing in *Co-operative News* (published 3, 10, 17 August 1912).¹⁴³ In March 1913, the Woolfs undertook a tour of a selection of Co-operative factories and wholesale businesses in Leicester, Manchester, Leeds, Bolton, Liverpool,

¹³⁸ Quoted in Cole, *A Century of Co-operation*, 216 (emphasis in original).

¹³⁹ Margaret Llewelyn Davies, 'Note on the Women's Co-operative Guild,' in *Life As We Have Known It*, xiii.

¹⁴⁰ Cole, *A Century of Co-operation*, 218.

¹⁴¹ Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the years 1911 to 1918* (London: Hogarth, 1964), 102.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁴³ Duncan Wilson, *Leonard Woolf: A Political Biography* (London: Hogarth, 1978), 50.

Carlisle and Glasgow, including a bakery, a jam factory, a soap works, a slaughterhouse and a boot factory.¹⁴⁴

The Woolfs' northern tour had an immediate and visible effect on Leonard Woolf; he came back from the tour and discussed the need to found a Co-operative College of Education with Davies which he then advocated in two articles in *Co-operative News*.¹⁴⁵ The effect of these visits on Virginia Woolf was not publicly evident, but her letters record the strong reactions she felt at her first face-to-face encounters with the labouring classes and their conditions of work in the factories. From Manchester on 11 March 1913 Woolf wrote to Eleanor Cecil: 'Why the poor dont [*sic*] take knives and chase us out of our houses, I can't think. They stand for 8 hours tying up 6 gross of jumpots.'¹⁴⁶ To Katherine Cox on 18 March 1913 she described how: 'Many valuable things come into my head at once; it is as if the thaw were beginning—seeing machines freezes the top of one's head. It's the oddest feeling, providential I suppose, so as to keep the poor quiet.'¹⁴⁷ These reflections focus on the disconcerting relationship between the working-class 'poor' and the financially comfortable middle classes, a theme that would reappear in much of Woolf's later cultural criticism. Woolf was doubtful about the motives and usefulness of the middle-class 'fiery reformers' active in this period of increased working-class militancy.¹⁴⁸ Seeing 'at a glance [...] the excitement of controlling the masses,' and recognising that 'if you could move them you would feel like a God,' she remained suspicious of the dictatorial, 'Imperial' role that middle-class reformers appeared to adopt in relation to the working classes on whose behalf they pledged to campaign.¹⁴⁹ She sensed that her own 'mistake' was 'in mixing up' her desire to become involved in bettering the condition of the working classes with 'philanthropy.'¹⁵⁰ Highly conscious of her securely middle-class status, Woolf was troubled by the potentially patronising position that philanthropic intentions could lead the middle classes to assume towards the working classes.

¹⁴⁴ Victoria Glendinning, *Leonard Woolf: A Life* (London, Simon & Schuster, 2006), 163.

¹⁴⁵ Wilson, *Leonard Woolf*, 51.

¹⁴⁶ *L* 2: 19.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

In June 1913, the Woolfs attended the Women's Co-operative Guild three-day annual congress in Newcastle. Leonard Woolf wrote an article in response to the conference for the recently-established *New Statesman*, 'an independent journal' of literature and politics which 'recognise[d] that vast social changes are imminent' and pledged to 'welcome them.'¹⁵¹ His article attracted the attention of leading socialists, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, through which he became a member of the Fabian Society and began writing regular articles for the *New Statesman* and undertaking larger socialist studies for the Fabians.¹⁵² Virginia Woolf, in contrast, suffered a severe breakdown shortly after the Congress and made no record of the proceedings or her involvement in them in either her published letters or notebooks of the time. There is no further evidence of her interest in or association with the Co-operative Movement until March 1914 when she records reading Co-operative manuals.¹⁵³ In December 1914, Woolf also began writing to Davies and their friendship developed over the following year with their letters becoming more frequent.¹⁵⁴ From 1916-1920, Woolf was actively involved in the Women's Co-operative Guild, organising and chairing monthly meetings at her home for the Richmond branch of the Guild.¹⁵⁵ She arranged speakers and discussions on social questions or labour problems, but was disappointed to find the twelve members quiet and often apathetic.¹⁵⁶ After 1920, Woolf and Davies remained regular correspondents. It was within this context that nine years later Woolf took the lead on behalf of the Hogarth Press in organising the publication of *Life As We Have Known It*, and that she found herself agreeing to write an introduction for it despite her reservations.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ 'Editorial Statement' of the first issue of the *New Statesman*, 12 April 1913, 5. Leonard Woolf's 'A Democracy of Working Women' was published in the *New Statesman* on 21 June 1913, 328-329.

¹⁵² Woolf, *Beginning Again*, 114.

¹⁵³ Woolf mentions reading Co-operative manuals in a letter to Leonard Woolf on 9 March 1914 (*L* 2: 41-42) and in a letter to Janet Case on 25 March 1914 (*L* 2: 45-46).

¹⁵⁴ On 9 December 1914, Woolf wrote Davies a letter in which she awkwardly attempted to discuss their friendship: 'It was good of you to write. I had a feeling you were coming here under false pretences—however, I can't explain it and it isn't worth explaining—anyhow, I don't feel that now' (*L* 2: 53-54). Her letters to Davies then became increasingly frequent in 1915.

¹⁵⁵ Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 360.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Woolf's primary role in the publication of *Life As We Have Known It* is indicated by the fact that she was Davies's correspondent on the matter; she acknowledged their receipt of the manuscripts (*L* 4: 65), was first to read them in 1929, and in a letter on 25 June 1930 assured Davies on her husband's behalf (he read all works before publication) that 'Leonard has not yet read the papers, but will' (*L* 4: 181).

When Woolf initially objected to Davies's request that she prepare a preface for *Life As We Have Known It* she declared that she was 'too much of a picturesque amateur' for the task before briskly asserting 'and I daresay none would be needed.'¹⁵⁸ Yet sometime the following year Woolf submitted to Davies's appeal; after all, this was the woman who Woolf felt 'could compel a steam roller to waltz.'¹⁵⁹ With the first gruelling draft of the 'Guild paper' finished in July 1930, Woolf still expressed 'grave doubts [about] whether the thing ought to be published' and wondered if 'it might be better for the book to stand on its own feet, or to have only a formal note of explanation.'¹⁶⁰ Writing to Davies on 14 September 1930, she once more voiced reservations and urged Davies and Lillian Harris to 'look through the paper again and decide whether you think it can be printed.'¹⁶¹ Woolf's severe anxiety about the matter is apparent as she reassures them: 'Honestly, I shall not mind in the very least (in fact in some ways I shall be rather relieved) if you say no.'¹⁶² Leonard's authority is evoked – 'for [he] agrees' – and she even supplies a back-up plan with the suggestion that if Davies feels 'it wont [*sic*] do [...] we should send the papers to Barbara Stephen [...] and ask her to write an introduction.'¹⁶³ Woolf's fear of being too socially and politically ignorant to write on working women is made apparent from her initial declaration of being 'a picturesque amateur' through to this last desperate suggestion that she should be replaced by Stephen, a specialist in women's education.¹⁶⁴ Stephen is presented as a suitable choice because 'she would approach the subject from a much easier angle,' indicating Woolf's feeling of the awkwardness of her own approach to the material of *Life As We Have Known It* as an interested but largely ignorant observer.¹⁶⁵ Her discomfort about introducing this book on behalf of its working women authors relates as much to Woolf's theories of life-writing, however, as it does to her sense of being unfit for the task.

Throughout Woolf's life-writing, Anna Snaith notes, there is a tension between her awareness of the need 'for women to write themselves into the public world,

¹⁵⁸ *L* 4: 65.

¹⁵⁹ See *L* 2: 30.

¹⁶⁰ *L* 4: 191.

¹⁶¹ *L* 4: 213.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *L* 4: 65.

¹⁶⁵ *L* 4: 213.

whether fictionally, biographically or autobiographically' and her conviction that women 'must not be written into the public arena as types ... [or] political tools.'¹⁶⁶ The Hogarth Press's acceptance of *Life As We Have Known It* for publication provided an outlet for working-class women to write themselves into the public arena, yet Woolf feared an attempt to introduce these voices, particularly when written from her middle-class viewpoint, would risk stereotyping the contributors and propagandising their words. In this manner, Woolf's artistic and political stance differs starkly from that of the many middle-class writers of the 1930s who engaged in writing documentary and fictional accounts of their encounters with poverty and the hardships of labouring-class life.¹⁶⁷ She desperately wished to avoid writing 'social propaganda' such as that critiqued by Q. D. Leavis in an article of 1935 titled 'Lady Novelists and the Lower Orders.'¹⁶⁸ Reviewing Naomi Mitchison's *We Have Been Warned* (1935) and Amabel Williams-Ellis's *To Tell the Truth* (1933), Leavis asserted:

there is something peculiarly irritating about the implicit assumption of authority that is apparent in these writers—an assumption grounded, it would appear, on nothing but class. Both give the same impression of having had to go out, notebook in hand, to examine proletarian homes and their inmates to equip themselves for writing about what their literary ancestors would undoubtedly have called the lower class.¹⁶⁹

Woolf determinedly resists authority in her introduction to *Life As We Have Known It*. Her greater concern to preserve the integrity of fact in this essay reflects a desire to avoid fictionalising her living subjects into sociological types. The multiple names Woolf gives to this text – she refers to it variously as a 'preface,' a 'paper,' a 'Letter,' an 'article,' a 'fiction' and an 'introduction' – indicate her discomfort about the task of writing on behalf of the volume's Co-operative women writers and her unwillingness to define the work as a piece of journalism, editorial comment, or social critique.¹⁷⁰ This groping for formal structure suggests Woolf's movement from experimental biographical writing towards a new dissident genre, her evolving cultural criticism. Her

¹⁶⁶ Anna Snaith, *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 45–46.

¹⁶⁷ Consider, for example, George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) or J. B. Priestley's *English Journey* (1934), discussed in my introduction, 12–13.

¹⁶⁸ Q. D. Leavis, 'Lady Novelists and the Lower Orders,' *Scrutiny* 4 (1935): 113.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 112. *Life As We Have Known It* is evoked as a contrast to these works in Leavis' review, in which Woolf's 'acute and sensitive introductory letter' receives a surprisingly generous appraisal (125).

¹⁷⁰ See *L* 4: 65, 191, 212.

response to *Life As We Have Known It* combines elements of fiction, autobiographical recollection, social commentary, literary criticism and biographical writing. By framing her preface with a flexible epistolary form, Woolf escapes generic classification and avoids adopting an authoritative critical stance towards the women whose autobiographical writings she surveys.

Woolf's 'Introductory Letter' opens in a similar manner to *A Room of One's Own*, with a narrator familiarly addressing an audience, in this case Margaret Llewelyn Davies, and offering a justification for the format and content of the words that are to follow. Woolf's narrator begins: 'When you asked me to write a preface to a book which you had collected of papers by working women I replied [...] I would [rather] be drowned' because '[b]ooks should stand on their own feet.'¹⁷¹ She continues by imagining herself '[t]urning the pages' and coming to see that 'on this occasion the argument did not apply' because 'this book is not a book.'¹⁷² As she explores what these pages might be if not a book she asks a series of questions before concluding that 'as all this had nothing to do with an introduction or a preface, but brought you to mind and certain pictures from the past, I stretched out my hand and wrote the following letter addressed not to the public but to you.'¹⁷³ The words 'not to the public' were not present in 'Memories of a Working Women's Guild'; added to the *Life As Known We Have Known It* version of the essay they emphasise Woolf's ironic portrayal of her 'Introductory Letter' as a private document rather than a public statement, in contrast to the rest of the book's determinedly public articles.¹⁷⁴ Through this playful artifice Woolf grants herself a premise for her casual tone, her fragmentary observations rather than conclusive analyses, and excuses herself as an ignorant rather than an informed commenter. Her personal knowledge of the Working Women's Guild is obscured in this essay, as Woolf neglects to mention her four years as chair of the Richmond branch, instead bypassing this period and her familiarity with the Guild's activities by imagining herself once more as the detached, middle-class observer who attended a Guild Congress in 1913.

¹⁷¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Introductory Letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies,' in *Life As We Have Known It*, xvii.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'Memories of a Working Women's Guild,' in *E* 5, 176.

The first third of Woolf's 'Introductory Letter' contains a sketch of 'a hot June morning in Newcastle in the year 1913' when the narrator was present to hear a number of speakers at the Women's Guild's Annual Congress.¹⁷⁵ The narrator's haphazard description of events and people – 'a women wearing something like a Lord Mayor's chain round her shoulders' or a woman 'sent [...] from Devonshire, perhaps [...] or some black mining village in Yorkshire' – suggests the congress is distant in her memory but also gives the impression that the occasion was incomprehensible at the time to an outside observer.¹⁷⁶ Her sense of 'something military in [...] the proceeding' and her portrayal of the female speakers as 'marksmen [...] standing up in turn with rifle raised to aim at a target' both reflect the '[d]etermination and resolution' of the Guildswomen and suggest an atmosphere of hostility in which the narrator feels ill at ease.¹⁷⁷ Woolf's figuring of the women as soldiers unflatteringly implies an element of regimented obedience in their demeanour while also evoking their underlying energy and strength. Although this energy is absorbed by 'argument and opposition,' there is a sense that it contains a latent threat which could be channelled towards the middle-class 'guests.'¹⁷⁸ This military imagery and the narrator's resultant anxiety are emphasised in the *Life As We Have Known It* version of the essay with the added detail of the Guildswomen's hands 'sho[oting] up stiff as swords.'¹⁷⁹ Woolf evidently wished to stress the 'weight of discomfort' the Guild's middle-class visitors were likely to feel when faced with these women, 'demanding divorce, education [...] higher wages and shorter hours.'¹⁸⁰ This discomfort stems in part from the intimidating figures these straight-talking working women present to a middle-class onlooker more familiar with 'phrases of easy eloquence,' but also from the middle-class narrator's acute awareness in their presence of her difference from these women and her class privilege; 'All these questions – perhaps this was at the bottom of it – which matter so much to the people here [...] leave me, in my own flesh and blood, untouched.'¹⁸¹ 'If every reform they demand was granted this very instant,' Woolf's narrator reflects in 'Memories of a

¹⁷⁵ Woolf, 'Introductory Letter,' xviii.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, xviii-xix.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, xx.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, xix-xxi.

Working Women's Guild,' 'it would not matter to me a single jot.'¹⁸² In her 'Introductory Letter,' perhaps under the influence of Davies, Woolf heightened the impact of this assertion by rephrasing it to read: 'If every reform they demand was granted this very instant it would not touch one hair of my comfortable capitalistic head.'¹⁸³

'A crafty reading' of this essay, Childers suggests, 'might argue that in this preface Woolf is not presenting herself so much as her understanding of the political location of middle-class women.'¹⁸⁴ Childers highlights that, as an employer of female workers, 'Woolf is inaccurate' when she declares that improvements to labouring-class education, sanitation, wages and working conditions would not touch one hair of her comfortable capitalistic head.¹⁸⁵ A decade later in 'The Leaning Tower' Woolf would urge her younger, male, leftist, literary contemporaries to admit their financial and intellectual dependence on the social system they denounce, noting that 'the violence of their attack on bourgeois society' is only proportional to the amount they 'are profiting by [the] society they abuse.'¹⁸⁶ In her 'Introductory Letter' to *Life As We Have Known It*, in contrast, Woolf either fails to recognise, or chooses to have her narrator repress the knowledge, that her middle-class privilege is achieved through keeping the labouring classes in a position of relative discomfort. As Childers notes, 'this preface usefully reveals what Woolf, or a woman in her position, may have particular trouble seeing.'¹⁸⁷ In both versions of the essay, Woolf casts herself as 'a benevolent spectator [...]' hypocritically clapping and stamping, an outcast from the flock.'¹⁸⁸ Woolf's narrator sidesteps the power dynamic that exists between the labouring-class Guildswomen and the middle-class observers, focussing instead on the uneasy position occupied by middle-class women who, in the nineteenth-century mode, adopt a philanthropic stance toward the working classes. The description of her 'interest' in the Guildswomen's grievances as 'thin spread and moon coloured' suggests that her concern is both flimsy, lacking 'life blood or urgency,' and somehow distinctly feminine.¹⁸⁹ Woolf's critique

¹⁸² Woolf, 'Memories of a Working Women's Guild,' 178.

¹⁸³ Woolf, 'Introductory Letter,' xxi.

¹⁸⁴ Childers, 'Woolf on the Outside Looking Down,' 67.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower,' in *CE* 2, 175.

¹⁸⁷ Childers, 'Woolf on the Outside Looking Down,' 67.

¹⁸⁸ Woolf, 'Memories of a Working Women's Guild,' 178; Woolf, 'Introductory Letter,' xxi.

¹⁸⁹ Woolf, 'Introductory Letter,' xxi.

of middle-class altruism in this essay is perhaps inspired by her ambivalent feelings during her earlier period of active involvement in the Co-operative Women's Guild, or her mixed experience of teaching working men and women at Morley College between 1905-1907, an activity which, as Lee notes, 'linked Virginia Stephen to her mother's and Stella's world of late-Victorian good works for women.'¹⁹⁰ In *The Years*, Woolf once more investigates the benevolent role of the middle-class Victorian woman through depicting Eleanor's ambiguous 'relations to "the poor".'¹⁹¹ Later in life Woolf favoured the more detached, benevolent role of supporter and campaigner, becoming an avid proponent of the Women's Service Library in the 1930s, for example, to which she donated money and books, notably biographies, and encouraged other women writers to do likewise.¹⁹² This essay is certainly less interested in the specific grievances raised by the working women speakers/writers than it is in the strained, potentially hypocritical position occupied by the sympathetic middle-class narrator.

Woolf's narrator finds herself too ignorant of the lives of the working women speakers to satisfactorily recreate the sensation of their experience: 'One could not be Mrs. Giles of Durham because one's body had never stood at the wash-tub; one's hands had never wrung and scrubbed and chopped up whatever the meat may be that makes a miner's supper.'¹⁹³ Woolf's casual allusion to her narrator's uncertainty about what meat a miner might eat for supper emphasises the distance between the narrator's experience and that of her labouring-class subjects, as well as condescendingly surveying the latter as if they might represent an entirely different species. In the second half of the text, switching to the mode of a biographical review, Woolf begins to introduce the contents of *Life As We Have Known It* in order to fill such gaps in her knowledge. Unlike in her earlier biographical reviews, Woolf resists embellishing and

¹⁹⁰ Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 222.

¹⁹¹ Y, 29. Childers also notes Woolf's 'careful[] dramatizing ... of Eleanor's involvement with working-class housing in *The Years*' in 'Woolf on the Outside Looking Down,' 71.

¹⁹² Woolf's involvement with the Women's Service Library (now the Women's Library housed in London Metropolitan University) is evidenced by a series of letters exchanged between Woolf and Vera Douie, the institution's first librarian, introduced by Merry M. Pawlowski in 'The Virginia Woolf and Vera Douie Letters: Woolf's Connections to the Women's Service Library,' *Woolf Studies Annual* 8 (2002): 3-62. 'I think [the Women's Service Library] almost the only satisfactory deposit for stray guineas,' Woolf wrote to Ethel Smyth on 1 June 1938, 'because half the readers are bookless at home, working all day, eager to know anything and everything, and a very nice room, with a fire even, and a chair or two, is provided' (L 5: 232). For further discussion of Woolf's involvement with the library see Anna Snaith, "'Stray Guineas": Virginia Woolf and the Fawcett Library,' *Literature and History* 12: 2 (2003): 16-35.

¹⁹³ Woolf, 'Introductory Letter,' xxiii.

fictionalising the lives of the individual women whose autobiographical sketches she summarises. The facts of these recollections are instead condensed into a collective account:

Most of the women had started work at seven or eight, earning a penny on Saturday for washing a doorstep, or twopence a week for carrying suppers to the men at the iron foundry. They had gone into factories when they were fourteen. [...] They had been so cold working in wintry fields that they could not run when the ganger gave them leave. [...] Kind old ladies had given them parcels of food which had turned out to contain only crusts of bread and rancid bacon rind.¹⁹⁴

By taking details from the lives of the individual women – only in Mrs Layton’s contribution, for example, is there a description of a woman receiving a ‘parcel ... [of] crusts that looked as if they had been nibbled by mice, and a large piece of bacon rind’¹⁹⁵ – Woolf adds force to her portrayal of the unjust conditions in which the labouring classes have lived but also undermines the significance of the experiences of each woman by presenting their private life as part of a shared class experience. The narrator repeatedly alludes to her own, very different experience of life, as if to excuse the limitations of her attempts to describe the women. ‘All this they had done and seen and known,’ she asserts, referring to her multiple subjects as a homogenous group, ‘when other children were still dabbling in seaside pools and spelling out fairy tales by the nursery fire.’¹⁹⁶ Mark Hussey proposes that modern-day readers with any knowledge of Woolf’s life will ‘easily identify Woolf herself as one of these fortunate children.’¹⁹⁷ The romantic details that continually interrupt the narrator’s attempt to think as a labouring-class woman are autobiographical signifiers of her own middle-class upbringing and wealth. Towards the end of her preface Woolf returns the reader’s focus to the individual women writers: ‘Listen, for instance, to Mrs. Scott, the felt hat worker,’ her narrator begs us; ‘Or take Mrs. Layton’s description of a matchbox factory in Bethnal Green.’¹⁹⁸ Woolf’s narrator acknowledges her failure to adequately represent the characters and experience of her female subjects and encourages the reader to turn instead to the women’s own accounts of their lives. Woolf not only admits but

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxiii-xxxiv.

¹⁹⁵ Mrs Layton, ‘Memories of Seventy Years,’ in *Life As We Have Known It*, 9.

¹⁹⁶ Woolf, ‘Introductory Letter,’ xxxiv.

¹⁹⁷ Mark Hussey, ‘Mrs. Thatcher and Mrs. Woolf,’ *Modern Fiction Studies* 50: 1 (2004): 22.

¹⁹⁸ Woolf, ‘Introductory Letter,’ xxxx.

highlights the inadequacies of her biographical portraits in this essay, presenting these inadequacies as further evidence of the immense divide, based on differences dictated by unequal wealth, which separates middle-class women from labouring-class women.

‘Woolf’s refrain in all her writings that touch on class,’ Hussey asserts, ‘is that one class is unknowable by another, a gulf the expression of which gains polemical force in her writings of the 1930s.’¹⁹⁹ In this early 1930s text, Woolf makes this gulf explicit. By figuring herself within the essay, rather than adopting an objective stance, Woolf turns her introduction to *Life As We Have Known It* into an exploration of this gulf and the impossibility of bridging it. Although she and her narrator are not one and the same, a distinction Childers astutely highlights with her proposal that the preface might not present Woolf herself, this text significantly portrays a version of Woolf.²⁰⁰ A signed essay, containing numerous autobiographical signifiers, Woolf’s ‘Introductory Letter’ determinedly supplies the reader with an image of its author, whose heightened ignorance and naivety serve to facilitate her investigation into the social anxieties and limited political consciousness of middle-class women. By bringing her own person into her preface Woolf emphasises that her biographical portraits of working women are given from a specifically middle-class viewpoint and resists presenting them as authoritative. She exposes the gulf between herself and her subjects, drawing attention away from their experience in favour of presenting her own conflicted emotional responses to their lives.

‘The impact of feminist thinking on the practice of life-writing,’ asserts Ferres, ‘is perhaps most evident in the now conventional appearance of the biographer in the text and in the attention to the relation of the biographer and her subject.’²⁰¹ The presence of Woolf’s subversive authorial narrator in her essay on the Women’s Co-operative Guild anticipates the anti-authoritative biographical approach of later feminist biographers and rejects the nineteenth-century ideal of the objective biography. ‘The majority of nineteenth-century biographies were written by people to whom the subject had been intimately known,’ as Cockshut notes, yet the ‘style of biographical writing which prevailed during [the] period encouraged suppression of the author’s feelings.’²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Hussey, ‘Mrs. Thatcher and Mrs. Woolf,’ 22.

²⁰⁰ Childers, ‘Woolf on the Outside Looking Down,’ 67.

²⁰¹ Ferres, ‘Gender, Biography and the Public Sphere,’ 317.

²⁰² Cockshut, *Truth to Life*, 13.

The ‘great tactical difficulty’ of the Victorian biographer was to maintain an apparently unbiased biographical stance and conceal ‘his own personal relationship to his subject.’²⁰³ Woolf’s synthesis of autobiographical reflection with biographical depiction undercuts the myth of objective biography and also, interestingly, corresponds to the emphasis on personal experience in documentary accounts of labouring-class life by middle-class writers in the 1930s, such as George Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier*.²⁰⁴ While Orwell’s narrator emphasises his personal contact with the labouring classes in *The Road to Wigan Pier* to give authority to his accounts of poverty and unemployment in Northern England, Woolf’s narrator in her ‘Introductory Letter’ evokes her personal encounters with the Co-operative Guildswomen to emphasise her middle-class discomfort and inability to write with authority on the lives of working women. Woolf’s cultural criticism differs sharply from Orwell’s writing through her insistence on the impossibility of bridging the divide between the middle classes and the labouring classes, her efforts to avoid casting herself as a working-class spokesperson, and by her lack of discussion of the economic and intellectual difficulties facing the labouring classes in 1931 as unemployment escalated to unprecedented levels.²⁰⁵ Foreshadowing her assertion in *Three Guineas* that the middle classes must attend to failings in their own class before seeking to reform another, Woolf’s ‘Introductory Letter’ focuses on the uneasy, hypocritical position occupied by her philanthropic middle-class narrator rather than the socio-economic difficulties encountered by her labouring-class subjects. On that topic Woolf sidesteps and leaves the Guild’s women to speak for themselves.

Conclusion

In ‘The Art of Biography,’ an essay printed in *Atlantic Monthly* in April 1939, Woolf concluded that the biographer ‘is a craftsman, not an artist; and his work is not a work of art.’²⁰⁶ ‘The biographer is bound by facts,’ she asserts, ‘[b]ut these facts are not like the facts of science [...]. They are subject to changes of opinion: opinions change as the

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Gollancz, 1937).

²⁰⁵ Unemployment figures peaked in Britain in 1931, as John Stevenson and Chris Cook note in *Britain in the Depression: Society and Politics, 1929-1939*, 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 1994), 15.

²⁰⁶ Virginia Woolf, ‘The Art of Biography,’ in *CE* 4, 227.

times change.’²⁰⁷ Woolf indicates not only the subjective nature of the biographer’s task but also the subjectivity of biography’s raw materials. The act of life-writing, Woolf admits, involves a process of selecting, filtering and presenting factual details that will always contain traces of the biographer’s cultural values, social outlook and political viewpoint, and which is inherently tied to the era in which the biographer writes. ‘What was thought a sin is now known, by the light of facts won for us by the psychologists, to be perhaps a misfortune,’ she contends, while ‘[m]any of the old chapter headings—life at college, marriage, career—are shown to be very arbitrary and artificial distinctions.’²⁰⁸ Woolf argues that the biographer ‘must go ahead of the rest of us, like a miner’s canary,’ acting as society’s critic by ‘testing the atmosphere, detecting falsity, unreality, and the presence of obsolete conventions.’²⁰⁹ ‘He must revise our standards of merit and set up new heroes for our admiration,’ she declares.²¹⁰ This late essay makes explicit Woolf’s concept of biography as a dissident genre that blends together not only history and literature but also, through the process of selection and representation, cultural commentary. In this sense she envisions life-writing as ‘something betwixt and between,’ a fluid genre ‘only at the beginning of its career,’ with ‘a long and active life before it.’²¹¹

Through her biographical writings of 1904-1931 Woolf rehearsed another dissident genre, that of her cultural criticism. In her early biographical journalism she challenged early twentieth-century ‘standards of merit’ and the patriarchal and nationalistic cultural values on which the nineteenth-century model of biography was based through her subversive portrayals of the inner life of atypical, often female subjects.²¹² In her 1920s writings she used life-writing and biographical source texts as tools to construct her feminist arguments, as evidenced in this chapter by her use of *Emily Davies and Girton College* to demonstrate the importance of women’s education in ‘Two Women’ and *A Room of One’s Own*. In her ‘Introductory Letter’ to *Life As We Have Known It*, Woolf blended biographical accounts with autobiographical reflections to undermine the myth of objective biography and to explore her anxieties about the

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*, 226.

class boundaries that divide women, undercutting her earlier sociological depiction of a collective female experience. ‘Honest enough to acknowledge that her lack of knowledge and understanding of working-class life and experience made her unfit to represent it,’ as Kathryn Simpson observes, Woolf’s ‘Introductory Letter’ deconstructs her image of the collective life of women writers in *A Room of One’s Own* by acknowledging class difference in a manner that displays her own prejudices in problematic and provocative ways.²¹³ Building on her complex negotiations of the tension between individual consciousness and the collective life of social groups through her reading and writing of women’s lives in her early career, Woolf aimed, as she moved into the 1930s, to engage more explicitly in contemporary public debates amongst intellectuals about the need to reform Britain’s social, political and economic structures.

²¹³ Kathryn Simpson, *Gifts, Markets and Economies of Desire in Virginia Woolf* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 7.

Changing Tack: Woolf's *The London Scene*, 1931-1932

Introduction

On 16 February 1931, nine days after Woolf had reached the end of her draft of *The Waves*, Aldous Huxley and his wife Maria dined with the Woolfs at Tavistock Square. The couple lived in France but were spending time in England while Huxley researched four articles for *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine* on the fate of industrial Britain during the depression.¹ David Bradshaw describes Huxley's 'frequent sallies across the Channel' during this period 'in order to monitor the effects of the slump at first hand.'² Far from 'an aloof and absentee observer,' Bradshaw argues, 'by the early months of 1931 ... [Huxley] became more intensely ravelled in the chronic social and political crisis which unfolded in the wake of the Wall Street Crash of October 1929 than any other British writer of his generation.'³ Meeting with Huxley at this time Woolf was similarly struck by his critical engagement with contemporary socio-political upheavals and felt intimidated by the couple's travels and involvement in public life. 'And I feel us, compared with Aldous & Maria,' she recorded, 'unsuccessful':

They're off today to do mines, factories .. black country; did the docks when they were here; must see England. They are going to the Sex Congress at Moscow, have been in India, will go to America, speak French, visit celebrities,—while here I live like a weevil in a biscuit.⁴

Woolf's discontent here stems in part from the sense of purposelessness and dejection that she often experienced after completing a novel. 'Lord, how little I've seen, done, lived, felt, thought compared with the Huxleys—compared with anyone,' she despairs.⁵

¹ The articles were 'Abroad in England,' *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, May 1931, 16-19, 84; 'Sight Seeing in Alien Lands,' *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, June 1931, 50-53, 118; 'The Victory of Art over Humanity,' *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, July 1931, 46-49; 'Greater and Lesser London,' *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, October 1931, 48-49, 108. All are reprinted in Aldous Huxley, *The Hidden Huxley: Contempt and Compassion for the Masses 1920-36*, ed. David Bradshaw (London: Faber, 1994). References will be to Bradshaw's edition.

² David Bradshaw, introduction to *Hidden Huxley*, viii.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *D* 4: 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*

However, her portrayal of herself as static and inactive, ‘toss[ing] among empty bottles & bits of toilet paper,’ while Huxley ‘is “modern”’ and ‘takes life in hand,’ also reflects a broader shift in Woolf’s intellectual focus early in 1931, as she too became increasingly interested in dissecting and analysing contemporary British culture.⁶

From a retrospective viewpoint, the early months of 1931 appear pivotal within the development of Woolf’s late cultural criticism. It was at this moment that Woolf began to direct her attention away from experimental fiction, represented by the completion of *The Waves*, and towards feminist cultural analysis, signified by her conception of ‘an entire new book [...] about the sexual life of women’ on 20 January 1931.⁷ Conceived a day before Woolf delivered a speech on ‘Professions for Women’ to the Junior Council of the London and National Society of Women’s Service (L&NSWS), this new project, ‘a sequel to a Room of Ones [*sic*] Own’ about which Woolf was ‘very much excited,’ later evolved into the unfinished ‘novel-essay’ *The Pargiters*, her major literary endeavour of the 1930s, before finally emerging into the public domain as *The Years* and *Three Guineas*.⁸ This shift from high modernist fiction to experimental social and political criticism was not anticipated or immediate. In fact, Woolf began 1931 with a resolution not to make resolutions, ‘Not to be tied.’⁹ Her desire to resist restrictive intentions and to remain open to spontaneity and innovation reflects her contemporaneous work on *The Waves*, her most stylistically inventive novel, and serves to remind us that Woolf’s cultural criticism in her late writings, the development of which this thesis aims to trace, evolved in response to numerous internal and external influences rather than according to a predefined plan.

Inspired by *The Waves*, images of the sea and of sea-faring proliferate through Woolf’s diary during January-February 1931. These nautical motifs evoke a mood of movement, change, flux, and, conversely, as she draws nearer to finishing her draft, a fear of stasis. ‘This is the turn of the tide,’ Woolf wrote of the lengthening days on 2

⁶ D 4: 12.

⁷ D 4: 6. Herbert Marder recognises the early months of 1931 as a turning point for Woolf and *The Waves* as ‘a transitional work’ in his biography, *The Measure of Life: Virginia Woolf’s Last Years* (London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 6. ‘Virginia Woolf’s last decade forms a coherent and distinct stage of her development,’ Marder asserts, as Woolf ‘now enter[ed] a phase in which ... [s]he would respond to the changed political climate of the 1930s’ (6-7).

⁸ D 4: 6.

⁹ D 4: 3; on 2 January 1931 Woolf wrote a list of resolutions for ‘the next 3 months; the next lap of the year’ of which the first and ‘most important’ was, ironically, ‘to have none.’

January 1931.¹⁰ ‘I’m chopping & tacking all the time’ she declared of her creative activity on 7 January.¹¹ The death of three men in an aeroplane crash near Rodmell on 25 January reminded her of ‘that epitaph in the Greek anthology: when I sank, the other ships sailed on.’¹² Ten days after completing her draft of *The Waves*, following the visit from Aldous Huxley, Woolf recalled this classical allusion to express her sense of literary inadequacy: ‘My ship has sailed on.’¹³ At a time when Woolf felt despondent and outdated, disillusioned both with the novel she had lately finished and with her wider oeuvre to date, she found her attention directed towards producing six essays for *Good Housekeeping* magazine.¹⁴ Viewed in the context of her ‘Professions for Women’ speech four weeks earlier, and with an awareness of the hybrid ‘novel-essay’ project that ‘sprang out’ of this paper, Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* essays clearly evidence her growing analysis of British patriarchal culture.¹⁵

Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* articles are often disregarded in discussions of her wider oeuvre yet they plainly reflect her turn to cultural criticism. Jeanette McVicker compellingly reads these essays and Woolf’s ‘Professions for Women’ speech in their historical context as indicative of ‘a vague but significant in-between moment of ... transition’ between the two major phases of Woolf’s career, the former ‘foregrounding the aesthetic and visionary,’ the latter ‘foregrounding the political, social and economic.’¹⁶ The speech and the series represent ‘parallel texts,’ McVicker argues,

¹⁰ D 4: 3.

¹¹ D 4: 4.

¹² D 4: 7; Woolf records witnessing the aftermath of the crash, ‘3 men dash[ing] from a blue car [...] a silver & blue aeroplane in the middle of a field apparently unhurt, among trees & cows.’ Her description anticipates the juxtaposition of ominous aircraft, fields and cows in *Between the Acts*. The ‘epitaph’ to which Woolf refers is an elegiac couplet ascribed to the Syracusan poet Theodoridas: ‘I am the tomb of a shipwrecked man. Sail on; / when we went down, the other ships sailed on.’ See *The Greek Anthology: And Other Ancient Greek Epigrams*, trans. and ed. Peter Jay (London: Penguin, 1974), 111.

¹³ D 4: 12.

¹⁴ Woolf’s six articles appeared in the following issues of the British edition of *Good Housekeeping*: ‘The Docks of London,’ December 1931, 16-17, 114-117; ‘Oxford Street Tide,’ January 1932, 18-19, 120; ‘Great Men’s Houses,’ March 1932, 10-11, 102-103; ‘Abbeys and Cathedrals,’ May 1932, 18-19, 102; ‘“This is the House of Commons”,’ October 1932, 18-19, 110-112; ‘Portrait of a Londoner,’ December 1932, 28-29, 132.

¹⁵ D 4: 6.

¹⁶ Jeanette McVicker, ‘“Six Essays on London Life”: A History of Dispersal,’ 2 Parts, *Woolf Studies Annual* 9 (2003): 143-165; and *Woolf Studies Annual* 10 (2004): 141-172; 1: 145. McVicker forcefully argues that ‘within the constellation of work undertaken between May 1930 ... and October 1932 ... these essays take on interest and ... significance as a window on Woolf’s thinking during the transition from finishing *The Waves* to beginning the complex project that would consume the next six to seven years of her life’ (1: 148).

‘linked together by the death in each of an Angel in the House.’¹⁷ When read not only in their historical context, I argue, but also in their original bibliographic context, Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* articles evidence even more strongly her growing desire to set out on a new course and to redirect her creative and critical activities toward public life through developing her analysis of women’s position within Britain’s social, economic and political power structures. This chapter expands McVicker’s insightful feminist-historicist contextualisation of these essays through a genetic unearthing of their textual history, or ‘pre-life,’ within the *Good Housekeeping* editions in which they first appeared.

Written between February and April 1931, Woolf’s six-article series for this popular woman’s magazine presents the reader with a culturally-engaged fictional tour of London’s major commercial, literary, religious and political landmarks. Her essays range from the Thames docklands to the former homes of Thomas Carlyle and John Keats; from Oxford Street’s department stores to the Houses of Parliament; from St Paul’s Cathedral to the drawing-room of a fictional cockney hostess, Mrs Crowe. The reader is guided around these different scenes by a discursive and imaginative narrative that often masks her essays’ cultural criticism. The theme of Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* series appears to have been inspired in part by her meeting with Aldous Huxley. His visit to the London docklands is reflected in her choice of subject for the first article of the series. The similarities detailed later in this chapter between Huxley’s docklands essay for *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine*, ‘The Victory of Art over Humanity,’ printed July 1931 and Woolf’s ‘The Docks of London,’ printed December 1931, are presumably coincidental as Woolf’s own essay was submitted to *Good Housekeeping* before Huxley’s text appeared. However, the presence of mammoth tusks in ‘The Docks of London,’ a devalued commodity that becomes a motif in her text, echoes a letter to Clive Bell on 21 February 1931 in which Woolf reported: ‘[Huxley] spends his week in London visiting docks, where with Maria’s help he can just distinguish a tusk from a frozen bullock.’¹⁸ Woolf’s visit to the Houses of Parliament to gather material for “‘This is the House of Commons’” similarly corresponds to Huxley’s use of his attendance at a parliamentary debate on 11 February 1931 as the basis for his

¹⁷ McVicker, ‘Six Essays on London Life,’ 1: 145.

¹⁸ *L* 4: 293.

forthcoming essay on the failings of modern democracy. It is impossible to conclusively determine the extent of Huxley's influence on Woolf's choice of subject matter for her *Good Housekeeping* essays, yet her attempt to document the physical, social, political and commercial landscape of London in this series evidently owes something to their encounter and conversation on 16 February 1931. In the wake of *The Waves*, as Huxley's visit made her painfully aware of her lack of public commentary on current affairs, Woolf used her *Good Housekeeping* contract as an opportunity to try blending cultural analysis with lyrical narrative in order to present an experimental critical portrait of urban, industrial Britain.

Long disregarded as an incidental commission undertaken purely for money, the posthumous publication of Woolf's six London essays as a monograph later brought them to the attention of her critics and readers. Originally published in *Good Housekeeping* between December 1931 and December 1932, the first five essays of Woolf's London series were reprinted in a collected edition titled *The London Scene* in 1975, first published in America and then in Britain in 1982, before later appearing with the addition of the previously omitted sixth essay in a generously illustrated second edition with the same title published in Britain in 2004.¹⁹ Since their first publication as a monograph Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* essays have been read variously as a feminist reclamation of the patriarchal city, an exploration of Englishness, a negotiation of 'the differences between aristocratic and democratic eras,' a 'reflection on the transformation from a Victorian social order to ... neo-imperialist commodity capitalism,' and an investigation into 'the materialist construction of space.'²⁰ They have also been dismissed, as Woolf herself dismissed them, as merely 'pure brilliant description' with 'not a thought for fear of clouding the brilliancy.'²¹ Even McVicker, whose shrewd analysis of these essays greatly informs this chapter, propagates the view

¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, *The London Scene: Five Essays by Virginia Woolf* (New York: Frank Hallman, 1975); Virginia Woolf, *The London Scene: Five Essays by Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth, 1982); Virginia Woolf, *The London Scene*, illustrations by Suzanne Barton (London: Snowbooks, 2004). All references to *The London Scene* articles in this thesis will be to the versions printed in *E* 5.

²⁰ See Susan M. Squier, *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 52; Sonita Sarker, 'Locating a Native Englishness in Virginia Woolf's *The London Scene*,' *NWSA Journal* 13: 2 (2001): 1-20; Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47; McVicker, 'Six Essays on London Life,' 1: 144; and Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth, introduction to *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, ed. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 24.

²¹ *L* 4: 301.

that '[r]eaders should not overvalue Woolf's journalistic writing.'²² As Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth observe, Woolf's 'much-overlooked' London series requires further attention.²³ Her fragmentary portrayal of the city in these essays and her glossy, evasive prose style encourage frustrated and multiple readings. Returning to these texts in their original site of publication reveals that Woolf never intended to publish her articles together as 'The London Scene.' The second and third essays of her series were advertised on the cover of *Good Housekeeping* and headed inside as 'The London Scene II' and 'The London Scene III' respectively, but this label was absent from the first essay and dropped for the publication of the fourth, fifth and sixth.²⁴ This pattern indicates that 'The London Scene' was an editorial addition rather than an authorial classification, yet the use of these words to title the two posthumous collected volumes of Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* essays has transformed their reception and left later critics searching for a consistent critical position that they do not necessarily contain.

In *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page*, George Bornstein insists that the way we understand a text is fundamentally tied to the context in which we encounter it.²⁵ Drawing on the work of editorial theorist Jerome J. McGann, Bornstein emphasises that a work's meaning is derived from both '[its] words, or "linguistic code," and its physical features, or "bibliographic code," ... [such as] page layout, book design, ink and paper ... as well as broader issues ... like publisher, print run, price or audience.'²⁶ The bibliographic code of a text, Bornstein argues, 'points to the work's "presence in time and space"'; 'Subsequent representations, particularly if they emphasize only the linguistic code ... tend to set the text free from its original time and place, locating it in

²² McVicker, 'Six Essays on London Life,' 1: 148.

²³ Snaith and Whitworth, introduction to *Locating Woolf*, 23-24.

²⁴ Interestingly, the word 'scene' had only recently begun to be employed in this sense, preceded by an adjective to describe a particular place or sphere of human activity. The earliest usage cited by the *OED* is a reference to 'the contemporary American scene' in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 15 October 1931, three months before *Good Housekeeping* used the term on the cover of their January 1932 issue to describe Woolf's articles; see *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed. [Web site and database] (Oxford University Press, 2010); available from <<http://www.oed.com>>; accessed 2 March 2010.

²⁵ George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7; the terms 'linguistic code' and 'bibliographic code' are taken from Jerome J. McGann's *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), in which McGann argues that both the words and the diverse material elements of a literary work contribute to its meaning (57).

our own principally as an aesthetic rather than historicized object.²⁷ Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* essays have suffered acutely through such a process of editorial relocation. The later monograph versions of these journalistic texts not only strip Woolf's essays of their original cultural and historical context, detaching them from the editorial, feature and commercial material alongside which the first readers of these essays encountered them, they also endow the series with an appearance of unity that the texts were never before required to exhibit. Written specifically for serial journal publication, Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* essays present not one 'scene' but rather a collection of contradictory visions of Britain's capital past and present. Woolf omits to present a clear critical viewpoint in this series, instead drawing a likeness of the city to which she has access and outlining the changes she has witnessed, as a woman, in the social, political and economic centre of patriarchal, imperialist Britain. The linguistic content of these texts may be identical in each version, but to read Woolf's London essays in an edition of *The London Scene* is not the same as to read them within *Good Housekeeping*.

Following the approach of periodical studies, a branch of literary scholarship which attempts to read magazines in their entirety as complex cultural objects, I aim to re-evaluate the cultural criticism of Woolf's *London Scene* series by resituating her essays within the publication in which they first appeared.²⁸ Fiona Hackney notes the scholarly tendency to assume that British women's magazines of the interwar period contained nothing more than a conservative portrayal of domesticity.²⁹ This mistaken assumption is regrettably visible in the scholarly reception of Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* essays. Otherwise sensitive discussions of the series are frequently hampered by the insinuation that Woolf was forced to dilute or 'dumb down' her cultural critique of modern London for the middle-class, middlebrow readers of this

²⁷ Bornstein, *Material Modernism*, 7; internal quotation taken from Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 222.

²⁸ For an overview of the debates and approaches of this recently evolved field of critical study see Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies,' *PMLA* 121: 1 (2006): 517-531.

²⁹ Fiona Hackney, "'Women are News': British Women's Magazines 1919-1939," in *Transatlantic Print Culture: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*, ed. Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 115. Hackney argues that these magazines were far less conservative than critics have previously assumed, demonstrating that 'from the early 1920s women's achievements in sports, the arts, and government, as well as the latest innovations in female dress, were regularly splashed across the media ... [and] were a favourite subject of popular editorial photo-features in women's magazines' (114).

publication. Susan M. Squier, for example, asserts that Woolf deleted social criticism from the first essay of her *Good Housekeeping* series in part due to ‘anticipation of the audience’s probable negative response.’³⁰ Sonita Sarker similarly contends that these essays represent a ‘restrictive frame’ for Woolf’s writing because they were ‘intended ... for a primarily North American and European bourgeois readership.’³¹ McVicker is one of the few critics to date to recognise that although *Good Housekeeping* seems ‘an unlikely place of publication’ for Woolf, the magazine offered a promising audience for her cultural criticism.³² As McVicker astutely observes, ‘the “new women” readers of *Good Housekeeping* in 1931-2 ... were the women whom Woolf was, ostensibly, addressing in her speech to the Society for Women’s Service in January 1931.’³³ A closer look at the early history of *Good Housekeeping* reveals that this commission offered an ideal outlet for Woolf’s developing feminist cultural analysis of patriarchal Britain. Less than two months after giving her speech on ‘Professions for Women’ to the Junior Council of the L&NSWS, Woolf opportunely framed her *Good Housekeeping* series as a six-part walking tour of industrial London through which she might consider the changing role of women in British society. Before turning to Woolf’s *London Scene* essays and tracing the ways in which her essays interact with the editorial, feature and commercial material of *Good Housekeeping*, the next section will provide a brief overview of this magazine and its assumed readership in the 1920s and early 1930s.

***Good Housekeeping*, its Readers, and Woolf’s Reputation in the Magazine**

The British edition of *Good Housekeeping* was launched by the National Magazine Company in 1922 and became an immediate financial success with a large readership. It was one of a range of magazines that began to appear post-1918 which, as Brian Braithwaite describes, sought ‘to reflect the radical social changes witnessed in the aftermath of the Great War.’³⁴ The loss of wealth amongst the upper classes, the increased affluence of the poor, and a substantial shortage of domestic staff in the early

³⁰ Squier, *Woolf and London*, 54.

³¹ Sarker, ‘Locating a Native Englishness,’ 6.

³² McVicker, ‘Six Essays on London Life,’ 1: 143.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1: 161-162.

³⁴ Brian Braithwaite, *Women’s Magazines: The First 300 Years* (London: Peter Owen, 1995), 29.

1920s, all combined, as Braithwaite notes, to bring about an increase in middle-class housewives learning to ‘fend for themselves.’³⁵ *Good Housekeeping* reached out to this market; it educated its readership in how to manage the family budget, provided meal plans, and founded the *Good Housekeeping* Institute in 1924 with its famous ‘Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval’ to guide readers to the best products for feeding, dressing, and running a household. Yet alongside the domestic advice, fashion segments, and fiction, *Good Housekeeping* also prided itself on paying attention to contemporary political and social issues as they affected women. An advertisement in the *Daily Mirror* on 23 February 1922 boasted of *Good Housekeeping*’s first issue, to be published in March:

[It] would be worth one shilling merely for the splendid stories and superb pictures it contains. It would be worth one shilling merely for the wonderful advance view it gives you of the Spring fashions. It would be worth one shilling merely for the illuminating articles on great Social Questions of interest to every woman. Get it. Read it. ... You will realize that *Good Housekeeping* is infinitely more than a magazine. It is a *New Institution*, destined to play an important part in the lives of thousands of women.³⁶

Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, *Good Housekeeping*’s editors fulfilled their promise to address the major social issues of the day by featuring articles from high-profile male and female writers on topics such as women in the professions, the difficulties of married life, the workings and problems of democracy, and the inequality of the sexes.

Careful examination of the editorial and feature material contained in *Good Housekeeping* around the time of Woolf’s contributions indicates a much more varied, complex and potentially receptive readership for her *London Scene* articles than most Woolf critics imagine. The inclusion of Phyllis Peck’s ‘Meals for the Business Girl’ in *Good Housekeeping*’s October 1932 edition indicates that the magazine’s target audience included not just wives and mothers but the new generation of single working women living alone that McVicker identified.³⁷ While *Good Housekeeping*’s

³⁵ *Ibid.* Theresa M. McBride records a 7.9% decline in the number of domestic servants in England and Wales between 1911 and 1921 as ‘the era of the First World War witnessed the end of the middle-class live-in servant’; see *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 111.

³⁶ Quoted in Braithwaite, *Women’s Magazines*, 31.

³⁷ Phyllis Peck, ‘Meals for the Business Girl,’ *Good Housekeeping*, October 1932, 76-77, 112-114.

advertising predominantly appeals to an assumed readership of middle-class housewives concerned with the health, well-being and appearance of themselves, their children and their home, the magazine's articles address an audience of married and unmarried women alert to social issues and current affairs as well as domestic matters. In 'The Sable Standard,' published in March 1932, Winfred Holtby satirizes 'fathers keeping their daughters idle at home so that no man can say of them, "Old So-and-So has to send his women out to work"'.³⁸ A month later, celebrity accounts from Huxley, G. K. Chesterton and others debate the position of Christianity in the modern world in a feature titled 'If Christ Should Come.'³⁹ In the September edition of 1932, Beverley Nichols discusses the European race for armaments and prophesies its culmination in war in 'I Shall Be a Conscientious Objector.' 'To me the most tragically grotesque element in the situation,' Nichols laments, 'is that the women, who really have it in their power to stop war, do their best to foster it.'⁴⁰ His sentiments in part foreshadow Woolf's own later feminist-pacifist position in *Three Guineas*; a remarkable correspondence considering clashes elsewhere in the two writers' political stances to be highlighted shortly. War could be averted from the nursery, Nichols argues, simply by making toy soldiers 'so hideous and so terrifying that they would give any child nightmares for weeks.'⁴¹ The suggestion that Woolf's feminist analysis of British patriarchy had to be diluted for a sheltered or narrow-minded *Good Housekeeping* audience is patronising and unjustified. Any limitations in Woolf's cultural criticism in her *London Scene* essays cannot, and should not, be explained as an unfortunate consequence of *Good Housekeeping*'s editor or readership.

When Woolf wrote for *Good Housekeeping* in 1931, the magazine was edited by Alice Maud Head. Head had become the first woman to run a publishing company in Britain at the age of 29 after taking up the editor- and directorship of *Good Housekeeping* in 1924.⁴² During her time at the magazine (1924-1939), Head

³⁸ Winifred Holtby, 'The Sable Standard,' *Good Housekeeping*, March 1932, 128.

³⁹ G. K. Chesterton, J. B. S. Haldane, Aldous Huxley and Dean Inge, 'If Christ Should Come,' *Good Housekeeping*, April 1932, 8, 99-100.

⁴⁰ Beverley Nichols, 'I Shall Be a Conscientious Objector,' *Good Housekeeping*, September 1932, 105-106.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴² Information relating to Head in this paragraph is drawn from Martin Pugh, 'Head, Alice Maud (1886-1981),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Web site and database] (Oxford University Press, 2004-2007); available from <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50062>>; accessed 14 June 2007.

commissioned articles from numerous prominent feminists and female politicians including Rebecca West, Millicent Fawcett, Ellen Wilkinson and Violet Bonham-Carter. Head herself was a remarkable character – the daughter of a builder, a suffragist, rumored to be the highest paid woman in Britain while at *Good Housekeeping* – and so it seems likely that Woolf would have made some reference to her in a letter or her diary if the two had had any contact. The only scraps of correspondence located to date between Woolf and the magazine are conducted through her agent, Curtis Brown, to whom Woolf sent the corrected proofs of her articles.⁴³ Although *Good Housekeeping*'s content discloses that Woolf might have presented herself as a forthright social commentator in her essays for the magazine had she wished, it should be noted that she does not seem to have been invited to appear in this role.

It is difficult to determine under what expectations Woolf was asked to write for *Good Housekeeping* and with what expectations she took up the offer. Nowhere in the published letters or diaries does she record her attitude to the publication or its readers. The first reference to the essays in Woolf's diary – 'And I am to write six articles straight off about what?' – suggests that she was commissioned by the magazine to write a series but that its subject had not been prescribed.⁴⁴ Later references in her diary and letters suggest she did not relish or take seriously the undertaking; 'I'm being bored to death by my London articles' she told Ethel Smyth on 22 March 1931.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Woolf dedicated time to researching the series, visiting the docks, the homes of Carlyle and Keats, and the Houses of Parliament specifically to gather material for the task. From her previous dealings with mainstream women's magazines we might assume Woolf viewed *Good Housekeeping* as populist and lowbrow but that this may have added to the commission's appeal. Writing for *Vogue* in the mid-1920s, Woolf furiously defended her journalistic conduct against the disapproval of the essayist Logan Pearsall Smith.⁴⁶ 'He says one must write only for the Lit. Supplement and the

⁴³ There are no references to Head in the published letters or the diary. A surviving note from Woolf, dated 18 March 1932, accompanied her corrected proofs for 'Abbeys and Cathedrals' to Curtis Brown, from where they were forwarded with a typed note to Miss K. M. Monson at *Good Housekeeping*; the notes are collected in 'The London Scene: "Abbeys and Cathedrals" Typescript,' in *VW: MA*.

⁴⁴ *D* 4: 12.

⁴⁵ *L* 4: 301.

⁴⁶ Woolf wrote five articles for British *Vogue* between 1924 and 1926. For Pearsall Smith's critical response to Woolf's contributions to the magazine and their ensuing debate see *L* 3: 154-159.

Nation and Robert Bridges and prestige and posterity and to set a high example,' she reported scornfully to her friend Jacques Raverat: 'I say Bunkum. Ladies' clothes and aristocrats playing golf don't affect my style; and would do his a world of good. [...] What he wants is prestige: what I want, money.'⁴⁷ Woolf justified her decision to write for *Vogue* on financial grounds; 'Money dignifies what is frivolous if unpaid for' as she asserted in *A Room of One's Own*.⁴⁸ Yet Woolf's real quarrel here, as Nicola Luckhurst observes, was with Pearsall Smith's priggish objection to her crossing the boundary between high and low culture.⁴⁹ Six years later Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* commission presented a similarly lucrative opportunity for cultural boundary crossing. The magazine paid well, but writing for *Good Housekeeping* also offered other bonuses.⁵⁰ Accepting this commission allowed Woolf to address a predominantly middle-class female audience, to dissociate herself from the distaste expressed by many of her male, highbrow contemporaries towards the readers and writers of popular journalism, and to playfully acknowledge her professionalism and marketability as a cultural commodity.

Looking at Woolf's persona in *Good Housekeeping* in the early 1930s she was presumably commissioned to write for the magazine as a renowned, female literary figure, popularly connected with the apolitical and elitist world of Bloomsbury. At the time of Woolf's contributions there remained an aura of exclusivity around Bloomsbury in *Good Housekeeping*'s gossip sections despite growing contempt from younger contributors towards the set. Woolf was exalted in the magazine's 'Ladies of Letters' series in April 1932. To her reviewer here, Mary Craik, the fact that Woolf 'is the daughter of Leslie Stephen' is at least as important as her literary output.⁵¹ *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* are considered at length, but *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* are dismissed as 'brilliant' but 'unsatisfying.'⁵² *Orlando*

⁴⁷ L 3: 154.

⁴⁸ AROO, 84.

⁴⁹ Nicola Luckhurst, *Bloomsbury in Vogue* (London: Cecil Woolf, 1998), 5-6.

⁵⁰ Stuart N. Clarke records that Woolf received fifty pounds minus ten percent to her agent, Curtis Brown, for each of her six *London Scene* essays: the *TLS*, in comparison, were paying Woolf thirty pounds an essay on average during 1929-1932; while *The Times* paid only fifteen pounds for 'Leslie Stephen, the Philosopher at Home: A Daughter's Memories,' a signed contribution published on 28 November 1932. For these figures and further information regarding Woolf's journalistic earnings in this period see Clarke's Appendix VIII in E 5, 663-667.

⁵¹ Mary Craik, 'Ladies of Letters II: Virginia Woolf,' *Good Housekeeping*, April 1932, 20.

⁵² *Ibid.*

started well but the second half was disappointing. *The Common Reader* and *A Room of One's Own* receive the highest praise. Craik's expressed preference for Woolf's essays and dislike of her experimental fiction reflects the assumed conservative literary tastes of the magazine's readership. We are encouraged to accept the inaccessibility of Woolf's visionary novels as an unavoidable consequence of her innate aloofness and intellectualism in this celebrity-focused column. 'One of her chief occupations in the country is keeping off callers,' we are told, 'for she is by nature a recluse.'⁵³

The image of Woolf as an isolated aesthete is propagated less sympathetically in 'One Roomitis,' an article written by Vera Brittain and published in *Good Housekeeping* in June 1932. This short piece outlines the physical and psychological suffering of single working women '[s]truggling to make ends meet ... [and] unable to afford the occasional theatres and cinemas and concerts ... for which their domestically dependant brothers manage to save out of a "man's" rate of pay.'⁵⁴ 'When Virginia Woolf pointed out the merits of *A Room of One's Own*, she wisely coupled it with five-hundred a year,' Brittain dryly observes; 'No doubt she realised well enough that the kind of room which can be rented out of three or four pounds a week is hardly likely to inspire original work.'⁵⁵ Brittain's damning critique of the living conditions of many unmarried female workers undercuts Woolf's feminist vision, highlighting its political and economic naivety. Emphasising her own experience of visiting a women's hostel in London, Brittain archly asserts that '[i]f Virginia Woolf had seen those cramped, dingy cubicles ... I think she would have agreed that the small study-bedrooms of Newnham are luxury itself.'⁵⁶

By 1931, in the context of economic depression, increasing political instability, and the highest levels of unemployment of the interwar period, the tide of popular opinion was turning determinedly against the intellectual liberalism of moneyed Bloomsbury, whose 'effort to live a life of rational and pacific freedom ... seemed unthinkable' to the next generation.⁵⁷ In 'A Study in Black,' an article printed in *Good*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁴ Vera Brittain, 'One Roomitis,' *Good Housekeeping*, June 1932, 31.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 31, 119.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁷ Quentin Bell, *Bloomsbury*, 2d ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), 117.

Housekeeping in March 1932, Beverley Nichols portrays 'Bloomsbury and Moscow and Greenwich Village' as the home of wealthy, sheltered 'idealists,' who,

after a glass of gin or its equivalent, will sketch for you a charming picture of the future state of the world ... [in which] we shall spend most of our time reclining in public parks in the shade of immense hygienic factories, talking with brilliant intelligence to ladies who wear smocks but no corsets.⁵⁸

Had Woolf wished to challenge such anti-Bloomsbury opinion or to write frankly on contemporary political issues for women then this magazine would have provided a perfect vehicle for her to do so. Interestingly she does not openly defend herself against such representations in her *Good Housekeeping* contributions.

Instead Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* essays flirt with her reputation in the magazine at this time as an exceptionally gifted but out-of-touch celebrity writer. Her contributions subtly play on the popular image of Woolf and her coterie as privileged aesthetes by figuring her narrator as a female *flâneuse* in the modern city.⁵⁹ Presenting her narrator in predominately urban, public spaces undermines the customary representation of Woolf as a recluse, while also maintaining a distance between the narrator and those around her through her role as an observer. This portrayal owns Woolf's upper-middle-class status through highlighting her possession of the private income and ample leisure time needed to wander London without purpose. Echoing her *flâneuse* narrator in 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure,' an essay first published in October 1927, Woolf appears here as both an affluent, solitary thinker and one of the mass, '[p]assing, glimpsing' the world around her as she herself is passed and glimpsed.⁶⁰ Her cultural criticism of modern London is concealed within the essays' lyrical narrative and by their editorial billing as 'a gallery of scenes made vividly alive by the brilliant pen of Virginia Woolf.'⁶¹ The glossy style Woolf adopts camouflages

⁵⁸ Beverley Nichols, 'A Study in Black,' *Good Housekeeping*, March 1932, 24.

⁵⁹ On the nineteenth-century figure of the *flâneur* within modernist writing see Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity,' *Theory, Culture and Society* 2: 3 (1985): 37-46; Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneur,' *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 90-110; and Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2-6.

⁶⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure,' in *E* 4, 485. Rachel Bowlby surveys Woolf's appearance as *flâneuse* and *passant* in this essay in 'Walking, Women and Writing: Virginia Woolf as *flâneuse*,' in *New Feminist Discourses*, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1992), 26-47.

⁶¹ Editorial billing of 'The Docks of London' in *Good Housekeeping*, December 1931, 16.

her feminist politics so that the misogynistic sentiments conveyed in the above quotation from Nichols, and the casual racism he expresses later in his article – ‘Do you like Indians? I don’t ... [but] the only chance for the whites, in the future, will be to accept a position of equality with, or even subservience to, the blacks and the yellows’ – can appear in the same issue as Woolf’s third essay without obvious friction.⁶² Yet beneath their polished prose and conventional framework it is just such bigoted patriarchal and imperialist assumptions that Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* series seeks to undermine.

The Female Consumer and Commodity Capitalism

The first two essays of Woolf’s *London Scene* series, often the most discussed in critical readings of Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* commission, present a parallel analysis of contemporary consumer culture. In ‘The Docks of London’ Woolf considers the global production and distribution of goods; in ‘Oxford Street Tide’ she depicts the high street apparatus for marketing and selling these commodities to the consumer. Woolf’s critique of consumer culture in these essays sits provocatively alongside *Good Housekeeping*’s pervasive commercial content. The magazine contained roughly two-hundred pages per issue in the early 1930s, of which advertising filled around sixty percent. Woolf’s first two contributions to *Good Housekeeping* celebrate her female bourgeois audience’s power as shoppers, while also urging her readers to be mindful of their potential vulnerability as consumers and of their influence and responsibilities within the workings of global trade.

In ‘The Docks of London’ Woolf draws together her analysis of consumer-driven capitalism with an evaluation of crumbling empire. The essay begins with an image of ‘the poet’ watching a ‘great sailing ship pass away on the horizon’ and the first line of Robert Bridges’ ‘A Passer-by’; “‘Whither, O splendid ship’”.⁶³ In contrast to the poet, who romantically imagines the ship ‘making for some port in the Pacific,’ Woolf’s narrator recollects the ship’s journey inland, asserting that,

⁶² Nichols, ‘A Study in Black,’ 98.

⁶³ Virginia Woolf, ‘The Docks of London,’ in *E* 5, 275.

one day almost certainly it must have heard an irresistible call and [...] sailed past the low banks of Gravesend and Northfleet and Tilbury, up Erith Reach and Barking Reach and Gallion's Reach, past the gas works and the sewage works till it found, for all the world like a car on a parking ground, a space reserved for it in the deep waters of the Docks.⁶⁴

McVicker observes that the opening of 'The Docks of London' plays on the Romans' insistence 'that "all roads lead to Rome",' which Woolf, 'mindful, like Conrad, of Britain's imperial project,' echoes with her suggestion 'that all ships "in time" come to anchor in the Port of London.'⁶⁵ Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) opens with a ship anchoring in the Thames Estuary and a menacing portrayal of London, the governing centre of the British Empire, as plagued by 'a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.'⁶⁶ Woolf's essay evokes Conrad's bleak opening, similarly presenting London not as an awe-inspiring imperial capital but 'the most dismal prospect in the world.'⁶⁷ The Thames is not 'home,' but a place in which ships 'lie captive, like soaring and winged creatures who have got themselves caught by the leg.'⁶⁸ Here 'gaudy funnels and the tall masts' of ships 'show up incongruously against a row of workmen's houses' and 'the black walls of huge warehouses.'⁶⁹ The idealised image of London presented by imperial propaganda, that which portrays the city as the seat of democracy, freedom and opportunity, is incompatible with the dirty reality of the labour-driven capital and its exploited workers. Snaith and Whitworth suggest that 'it was for their importance to the workings of imperial capital that the docks served as an entry point to [Woolf's] essay series, as of course they do for London itself.'⁷⁰ 'The Port of London, established in 1908,' they note, 'was the edge of empire, a space of transformation and dispersal ... a symbolic microcosm, compressing imperial space in a similar manner to the display of colonial commodities and raw materials in the imperial exhibitions held in the metropolis.'⁷¹ The opening of 'The Docks of London' echoes Woolf's earlier essay on the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley, indicating that she also made this comparison.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ McVicker, 'Six Essays on London Life,' 1: 146.

⁶⁶ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1994), 5.

⁶⁷ Woolf, 'The Docks,' 276.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Snaith and Whitworth, introduction to *Locating Woolf*, 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

In 'Thunder at Wembley,' published in the *Nation & Athenaeum* on 28 June 1924, Woolf depicted the violent destruction of the British Empire through describing a thunderstorm at the British Empire Exhibition of 1924. In reality, Kurt Koenigsberger records, the summer storms of 1924 'only dampened the Exhibition, rather than bringing it to ruin,' but Woolf used this essay, which draws on her visit to the exhibition on 29 May 1924, to present an 'apocalyptic vision of empire's dissolution.'⁷² 'Thunder at Wembley' begins with a vast array of foods, fabrics, domestic and commercial products displayed at the Empire Exhibition and the buildings that house them, all of which Woolf characterises as 'mediocre.'⁷³ With the onset of 'a rushing sound,' her narrator suddenly drops her satirical portrayal of Britain's territorial 'possessions' as she reads in the sky that 'some appalling catastrophe is impending.'⁷⁴ The imaginary storm descends 'in violent commotion' and Woolf portentously presents the Exhibition's dousing as the Empire's demise in a final, climactic scene that echoes the patriotic finale of an imperial pageant:

Colonies are perishing and dispersing in spray of inconceivable beauty and terror which some malignant power illuminates. [...] Humanity is rushing to destruction, but humanity is accepting its doom. [...] The Empire is perishing; the bands are playing; the Exhibition is in ruins. For that is what comes of letting in the sky.⁷⁵

Seven years later, Woolf's description of '[t]he sky [...] laden with heavier, purpler clouds' over the city in 'The Docks of London' echoes both Conrad's 'mournful gloom' over London in *Heart of Darkness* and her own earlier portrayal of the sublime, 'livid, lurid' sky that annihilates the Empire Exhibition in 'Thunder at Wembley.'⁷⁶ There is no explicit anticipation of the Empire's downfall in Woolf's later essay, though the Dickensian tone set by her grim descriptions of London and the docklands indicates how outdated this grubby, tyrannical, Victorian 'authority of the city' has become and

⁷² Kurt Koenigsberger, 'Virginia Woolf and the Empire Exhibition of 1924: Modernism, Excess, and the Verandahs of Realism,' in *Locating Woolf*, 112. Koenigsberger's article provides a thorough overview of Woolf's 1924 essay and its critique of Empire.

⁷³ Virginia Woolf, 'Thunder at Wembley,' in *E* 3, 411.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* The climax of this essay foreshadows nature's interference in Miss La Trobe's pageant in *Between the Acts*, a text which similarly questions Britain's imperial values and anticipates England's downfall, although with less exaltation and greater pathos, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

⁷⁶ Woolf, 'The Docks,' 277; Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 5; Woolf, 'Thunder at Wembley,' 413.

suggests its demise.⁷⁷ A reference in Woolf's diary on 26 January 1931 to Gandhi's release from prison, where he had been held for civil disobedience since May 1930, shows that Woolf was following India's campaigns for independence from Britain in the newspapers at this time.⁷⁸ Her *Good Housekeeping* series begins by exposing the oppressive aspects of Britain's imperialist project and anticipating the collapse of this power system as she had in 'Thunder at Wembley,' although, interestingly, her critique of empire is implicit rather than overt in this later essay, in which Woolf's cultural criticism is focused instead on the position of her female readers in relation to the workings of capitalist free trade.

'The Docks of London' draws Woolf's readers' attention to 'the whole machinery of production and distribution.'⁷⁹ Woolf characterises the 'temper' of the Docks as 'severely utilitarian'; 'each package of this vast and varied merchandise [is] picked up and set down accurately [...] without haste, or waste, or hurry, or confusion by a very few men in shirt-sleeves [...] working with the utmost organisation in the common interest.'⁸⁰ Amongst this efficiency and order 'rarities and oddities' are able to sneak in – '[a] snake, a scorpion, a beetle, a lump of amber, the diseased tooth of an elephant, a basin of quicksilver' – but even these 'beauties' are 'instantly tested for their merchantile value.'⁸¹ The narrator challenges this commercial value system with her description of the fate of 'a heap of larger and browner tusks' laid out 'among the circles of elephant tusks' on the floor.⁸² A mammoth tusk is of less value than elephant ivory to the buyer, we are informed, because it 'tends to warp' and so can be used 'only [for] umbrella handles and the backs of the cheaper kind of hand-glass.'⁸³ Woolf's narrator highlights the absurdity that mammoth tusks, which are a greater rarity than elephant tusks and 'have lain frozen in Siberian ice for fifty thousand years' have 'been examined and graded' as inferior objects.⁸⁴ By another value system these tusks could be celebrated historical artefacts, but within a society built on imperial expansion for commercial gain 'if you buy an umbrella or a looking-glass not of the finest quality, it is

⁷⁷ Woolf, 'The Docks,' 277.

⁷⁸ *D* 4: 8.

⁷⁹ Woolf, 'The Docks,' 279.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

likely that you are buying the tusk of a brute that roamed through Asian forests before England was an island.’⁸⁵

Aldous Huxley’s docklands essay, ‘The Victory of Art Over Humanity,’ here provides an interesting comparison. Like Woolf, he also draws attention to the utilitarian nature of the London docks, portraying their workings as ‘efficient and progressive’ and referring to the bizarre fact that mammoth tusks are ‘not commercially so valuable’ as elephant tusks.⁸⁶ Both accounts reveal Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism – the process by which commodities ‘appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own’ capable of ‘entering into relation both with each other and with the human race’ – by obscuring the involvement of humans in producing, transporting and storing the goods they describe.⁸⁷ Huxley’s essay is devoid of dockland workers; he writes only of the labour of the anonymous co-ordinating ‘Port of London Authority.’⁸⁸ By omitting the precise origin of the ‘fantastic profusion of eatables, drinkables, smokables, wearables and miscellaneous usables assembled from every corner of the earth’ in the dockland warehouses, Huxley highlights the reader’s lack of knowledge of the colonial nations and peoples who manufacture the goods sold in Britain.⁸⁹ His portrayal concludes by reminding his readers that ‘this Gargantuan profusion ... is the symbol and symptom of world-wide poverty.’⁹⁰ Snaith and Whitworth contend that Woolf aims to remind her readers of their ignorance about Britain’s colonies in ‘The Docks of London’; she similarly omits to contemplate the colonial labour from which the commodities of the docks derive.⁹¹ Unlike Huxley, Woolf includes brief references to the presence of dockland workers at the beginning of her essay but they are soon replaced by ‘cranes’ that ‘dip and swing’ as if without human guidance.⁹² As Snaith and Whitworth argue, ‘Woolf’s main focus ... is not humans but capital.’⁹³ The allusion to Marx’s critique of ‘the religious analogies used

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Aldous Huxley, ‘The Victory of Art Over Humanity,’ in *Hidden Huxley*, 84-86.

⁸⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, 2 Vols. (London: Penguin in association with *New Left Review*, 1990), 1: 165.

⁸⁸ Huxley, ‘The Victory of Art Over Humanity,’ 86.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹¹ Snaith and Whitworth, introduction to *Locating Woolf*, 25.

⁹² Woolf, ‘The Docks,’ 279.

⁹³ Snaith and Whitworth, introduction to *Locating Woolf*, 26.

to describe commodities'⁹⁴ that Snaith and Whitworth find in Woolf's description of the wine vaults as 'a vast cathedral' in which '[w]e might be priests worshipping [...] some silent religion'⁹⁵ is similarly paralleled by Huxley's allusion to the dockland warehouses as 'cathedrals.'⁹⁶ The two essays differ sharply, however, in the candour and direction of their cultural criticism. Huxley's narrator uses his description of the London docks to critique the global over-production of goods which, he argues, results in a cycle of unemployment and lower-consumption, and to polemically suggest that 'some larger equivalent of the Port of London Authority' is needed 'to deal with the larger chaos of world trade.'⁹⁷ Rather than looking outwards to discuss the global economies of trade, Woolf's essay instead turns inwards to provide an implicit commentary on her *Good Housekeeping* readers' role in the economies of trade.

At the close of 'The Docks of London' Woolf's narrator suddenly turns the focus back on herself and her readers with the assertion that '[i]t is we—our tastes, our fashions, our needs—that make the cranes dip and swing, that call the ships from the sea.'⁹⁸ Snaith and Whitworth read this 'we' as 'a mass defined by its powers of consumption ... bodies [that] exist for their part in the circulation and accumulation of capital.'⁹⁹ Yet Woolf's final appeal to her largely female bourgeoisie readership to recognise that the 'only thing [...] that can change the routine of the docks is a change in ourselves' appears to encourage her individual readers to realise their potential influence as shoppers.¹⁰⁰ 'The radical economic ideas of Maynard Keynes, advocate of deficit spending and credit for the consumer to boost the economy,' Kathryn Simpson argues, 'seem to have informed Woolf's experience of and ideas about economic issues.'¹⁰¹ Keynesian economics are obliquely present in Woolf's ambiguous portrayal of the individual consumer as 'an important, a complex, a necessary animal,' whose spending habits impact directly on the workings of global trade.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹⁵ Woolf, 'The Docks,' 279.

⁹⁶ Huxley, 'The Victory of Art Over Humanity,' 86.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹⁸ Woolf, 'The Docks,' 280.

⁹⁹ Snaith and Whitworth, introduction to *Locating Woolf*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, 'The Docks,' 279.

¹⁰¹ Kathryn Simpson, *Gifts, Markets and Economies of Desire in Virginia Woolf* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 135. See also Jennifer Wicke, "'Mrs. Dalloway Goes to Market": Woolf, Keynes, and Modern Markets,' *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 28: 1 (1994): 5-23.

¹⁰² Woolf, 'The Docks,' 280.

Woolf's ambivalent treatment of the consumer in this essay foreshadows modern attitudes to the activity of shopping. Rachel Bowlby outlines the late twentieth-century transformation of the shopper, from the 1960s vision of a 'dim and dazed ... childlike housewife passively picking up brightly coloured things' to the contemporary notion of the consumer as 'the model of modern individuality,' a 'rational planner who knows what she wants and competently makes her selection.'¹⁰³ Woolf was obviously writing about a much earlier stage of consumerism, yet she also juxtaposes these two contrary images of the female shopper. On the one hand she criticises the consumer's ignorance of how commodities are made and sourced, paralleling Bowlby's vision of the naive and easily-manipulated shopper by ridiculing our lack of awareness that the handle of the 'umbrella we swing idly to and fro' was once the tusk of a mammoth.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand she punningly suggests, naming herself in the process, that her every act has the potential to influence trade with the fanciful suggestion that '[b]ecause one chooses to light a cigarette, all those barrels of Virginian tobacco are swung on shore.'¹⁰⁵ Rather than condemning the reader's current ignorance of their role in the global production and transportation of commodities, in this essay Woolf seeks to empower the female consumer/reader to recognise and use their influence over the workings of trade positively. This sympathy with the shopper echoes her article on 'The Plumage Bill' for the *Woman's Leader* in 1920, in which Woolf responded to H. W. Massingham's condemnation of women who support the plumage trade by continuing to buy feathers despite the trade's cruelty to birds. Here Woolf both recognised the consumer's limited power, arguing that Massingham had unfairly overlooked the role of the male 'plume hunters' and 'profiteers' in 'murder[ing] and tortur[ing] the birds,' while also alluding to the strength of her own 'vow taken in childhood and hitherto religiously observed' not to buy plumage.¹⁰⁶ In 'The Docks of London,' Woolf anticipates contemporary debates about ethical shopping by prompting her readers to see themselves as powerful buyers rather than culpable consumers.

Good Housekeeping provides an interesting vehicle for this appeal for responsible shopping. This popular magazine flourished through the selling of

¹⁰³ Rachel Bowlby, *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping* (London: Faber, 2000), 5-7.

¹⁰⁴ Woolf, 'The Docks,' 280.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'The Plumage Bill,' in *E* 3, 241-243.

advertising space, which not only maintained the magazine financially but also fulfilled part of its editorial project to inform the reader of new domestic products.¹⁰⁷ Although commercial material remains supplementary to and separate from the editorial material of *Good Housekeeping*, the presence of editorial features promoting and examining the benefits of different appliances and commodities blurs the distinction between advertising and content. Footers along the bottom of the page reassure the potential consumer that ‘Advertised Goods are Good Goods’ and ‘All advertisements in GOOD HOUSEKEEPING are guaranteed.’ The practice of splitting articles in *Good Housekeeping*, printing half in the main editorial section of the magazine and the final paragraphs amongst the advertising of the back pages, places Woolf’s assertion of the female consumer’s power over the operations of global trade in a conflicted context. While she suggests that ‘the only thing [...] that can change the routine of the docks is a change in ourselves,’¹⁰⁸ brash slogans attempt to manipulate the reader to spend by exclaiming ‘Which side of your carpet is wearing out?’ or “‘Look Connie, delicious Cod Liver Oil!’”¹⁰⁹ Woolf’s article and *Good Housekeeping* magazine both encourage the reader to see themselves as Bowlby’s rational, selective consumer but for different reasons: Woolf’s portrayal promotes responsible shopping; *Good Housekeeping* boosts the reader’s sense of worth as a shopper so that they will feel that the time they dedicate to thinking about shopping is important and a practical necessity.

While ‘The Docks of London’ reminds readers of their ignorance of the origins of the goods they purchase and ridicules the trust in advertised products which *Good Housekeeping*’s footers attempt to promote, ‘Oxford Street Tide’ celebrates the transformative processes that turn raw materials into a dazzling array of consumables to gratify the shopper. In Woolf’s second London essay the crude materials of the docks have been scaled down and refined into saleable luxuries; the ‘huge barrels of damp tobacco have been rolled into innumerable neat cigarettes’ while the ‘grease of sheep’s thick wool has become scented cream for delicate skins.’¹¹⁰ ‘Oxford Street Tide’ extends Woolf’s earlier fictional and critical representations of the female shopper in

¹⁰⁷ Following the ‘advertising revolution’ that took place in American magazine culture in the 1890s, Richard Ohmann contends, *Good Housekeeping* became ‘the kind of magazine that reached a large audience and thrived on advertising’; see Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 82, 354 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰⁸ Woolf, ‘The Docks,’ 279.

¹⁰⁹ Advertisements, *Good Housekeeping*, December 1931, 115, 117.

¹¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, ‘Oxford Street Tide,’ in *E* 5, 283.

London. Her narrator delights in the rush of the city just as Clarissa rejoices in ‘the bellow and the uproar; [...] the triumph and the jingle’ of urban life in *Mrs Dalloway*.¹¹¹ She is as fascinated by Oxford Street’s department stores as Orlando is bewildered by Marshall & Snelgrove’s in Woolf’s pseudo-biography.¹¹² Oxford Street appears here as a tantalising ‘bright stream’ of commerce, echoing the presentation of Oxford Street in ‘Street Haunting’ as a beauty-sprinkled ‘tide of trade.’¹¹³ Unlike Clarissa, Orlando or the detached speaker of ‘Street Haunting,’ however, the narrator of ‘Oxford Street Tide’ does not participate in the activity of shopping. Reginald Abbott argues that ‘Woolf’s response to the marketplace ... operates on two levels: personal (shopping) and collective (spectacle)’; in her *Good Housekeeping* essays Woolf adopts a firmly collective view of commodity capitalism.¹¹⁴

Woolf negotiates London’s largest shopping space in ‘Oxford Street Tide’ from the perspective of an investigative spectator. Although this essay deals with commercial exchange at the level of the individual shopper, Woolf’s distanced narrator does not engage in this exchange but looks on and describes the transactions of Oxford Street as a whole. Individuals stand out for a moment, but in general Oxford Street is depicted as a ‘river’ of anonymous commerce just like the Thames. This river differs from the docks, however, in its femininity. Here ‘black coats’ and ‘satin dresses’ denote a feminised economic space in which the male workers, buyers and sellers of the docklands have been exchanged for ‘[t]ripping, mincing’ shop assistants, many of them women, and female shoppers.¹¹⁵ In Oxford Street the emphasis is on appearance and spectacle rather than economy. ‘Everything glitters and twinkles’ in an attempt to produce desire in the shopper, reminding the middle-class reader how important advertising and display are to the department store owners who aim to create the demands for which they cater.¹¹⁶ Woolf’s article highlights that behind this show ‘of

¹¹¹ *MD*, 4.

¹¹² *O*, 207-210.

¹¹³ Woolf, ‘Oxford Street Tide,’ 284; Woolf, ‘Street Haunting,’ 485.

¹¹⁴ Reginald Abbott, ‘What Miss Kilman’s Petticoat Means: Virginia Woolf, Shopping, and Spectacle,’ *Modern Fiction Studies* 38: 1 (1992): 195-196.

¹¹⁵ Woolf, ‘Oxford Street Tide,’ 283. In *Shops and Shopping: 1800-1914* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), Alison Adburgham notes that ‘[t]he trend to have women shop assistants was greatly accelerated by the First World War,’ after which ‘women predominated’ in department stores (236).

¹¹⁶ Woolf, ‘Oxford Street Tide,’ 283. In *A History of Shopping* (London: Routledge, 1966), Dorothy Davies argues that department stores (a late nineteenth-century phenomenon), with ‘their ever-changing

excitement [...] of entertainment, of windows lit up at night,' the same utilitarian principles of efficiency of the docklands are in operation as 'the great merchant' wonders 'how [he] can display [his] goods with the minimum of waste and the maximum of effectiveness.'¹¹⁷ Within this environment, each consumer is only one of 'the multitude that here unending beauty, ever fresh, ever new, very cheap and within the reach of everybody bubbles up every day of the week from an inexhaustible well.'¹¹⁸

This essay was the first of Woolf's series to be headed in *Good Housekeeping* with 'The London Scene,' which alongside the editorial billing's allusion to 'its distinguished author' suggested that the article would offer an insight into the activities of contemporary London's cultural elite.¹¹⁹ Yet 'Oxford Street Tide' denies the reader access to the 'more sublime rites' of highbrow fashion, which, Woolf's narrator reminds us, 'has secret crannies off Hanover Square, round about Bond Street, to which it withdraws discreetly.'¹²⁰ This essay focuses instead on 'the garishness and gaudiness of the great rolling ribbon of Oxford Street,' the shopping ground of the masses, in which 'bargains,' 'sales,' and 'goods marked down to one and eleven three that only last week cost two and six' entice the eyes of 'the middle-class woman' to 'glisten unseemly' as she 'grab[s] and pounce[s] with disgusting greed.'¹²¹ As in 'The Docks of London,' Woolf's second essay closes by presenting her middlebrow *Good Housekeeping* readers with a portrait of themselves. For the most part in this essay, however, her cultural criticism is more descriptive than corrective. Woolf's narrator avoids owning her critique of the middle-class shopper by alluding to the figure of a moralist, to whom she assigns the task of condemning the negative aspects of consumerism. 'Moralists have been known to point the finger of scorn at those who buy' in Oxford Street, the narrator asserts, but 'even a moralist must allow that this gaudy, bustling, vulgar street reminds us that life is a struggle; that all building is perishable; that all display is vanity.'¹²² Woolf's narrator is seduced by this commodity-driven environment not in spite of its artifice but because of it.

windows and shop-displays emphasizing "novelty" and "up-to-dateness" were 'at least partly responsible for the way the middle classes gradually became fashion conscious' (292).

¹¹⁷ Woolf, 'Oxford Street Tide,' 285-286.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹¹⁹ Editorial billing of 'Oxford Street Tide' in *Good Housekeeping*, January 1932, 18.

¹²⁰ Woolf, 'Oxford Street Tide,' 283.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 283, 286.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 283, 287.

‘Oxford Street Tide’ contains Woolf’s most enthusiastic presentation of the city in her *Good Housekeeping* series as her narrator delights in London’s transiency and superficiality, declaring that the modern city’s ‘charm [...] is that it is not built to last; it is built to pass.’¹²³ The way in which modern Londoners build ‘for ourselves and our own needs’ is presented as the driving ‘impulse’ behind ‘invention,’ ‘creation and fertility.’¹²⁴ The connection Woolf makes here between High Modernist aesthetic experimentation and decadent, ‘throwaway’ consumer culture is strengthened in *Good Housekeeping* by the strikingly modern black-and-white illustrations by S. G. Hulme printed alongside ‘Oxford Street Tide.’ Hulme’s images depict the flow of London traffic, buses and people, a shop window with a ‘SALE’ sign, and a stylised female form in a fur coat ambiguously representing either a woman or a manikin; the human shopper and the displays that entice her are interestingly blurred together as one by Hulme’s design.¹²⁵ These illustrations are drawn in bold, angular shapes quite uncommon in the contemporaneous pages of *Good Housekeeping*. ‘[O]ur modern aristocrats have built palaces just as in ancient days the Dukes of Somerset and Northumberland, the Earls of Dorset and Salisbury lined the Strand with their stately mansions,’ Woolf’s narrator asserts, but these palaces significantly undercut the ‘illusion of permanence’ propagated by ‘the old builders and their patrons, the nobility of England.’¹²⁶ ‘We do not build for our descendants,’ she declares; ‘We knock down and rebuild as we expect to be knocked down and rebuilt.’¹²⁷ ‘Woolf approves of Oxford Street,’ Pamela L. Caughie asserts, ‘for adapting to changing circumstances, for baring its devices.’¹²⁸ The commercial frenzy of Oxford Street with its endless sales and marked-down commodities unveils the chaos of contemporary world trade and the current over-production of goods, transforming this chaos into a stimulus to aesthetic innovation. Led by the ever-changing desires of the masses, Woolf suggests in ‘Oxford Street Tide,’ the modern city is free from the burden of preserving its history or building

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹²⁵ Illustrations for ‘Oxford Street Tide,’ *Good Housekeeping*, January 1932, 18-19.

¹²⁶ Woolf, ‘Oxford Street Tide,’ 284-286.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹²⁸ Pamela L. Caughie, ‘Purpose and Play in Woolf’s *London Scene* Essays,’ *Women’s Studies* 16 (1989): 401. Caughie powerfully argues that ‘Woolf celebrates Oxford Street over the docks ... not because Oxford Street is a liberation from the social-economic order of the docks, but because it assumes a different attitude toward that order, makes a different use of it, exploits it, exposes it’ (400).

its legacy, but can continually reconstruct its commercial palaces to respond to the needs of the present.

Monuments and the Modern City

Melba Cuddy-Keane describes the ‘dominant motif’ of Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* series as ‘the contrast between past and present.’¹²⁹ These essays ‘use relations between different spaces in London to expose the ambiguities and tensions of modern life,’ to ‘probe the differences between aristocratic and democratic eras,’ and to illustrate Woolf’s ‘antipathies toward the hierarchical and monumentalized past.’¹³⁰ Throughout her late cultural criticism, Woolf discloses an aversion to the nineteenth-century practice of monumentalising people and things. The next section of this discussion will turn to Woolf’s portrayal of the role of cultural and religious monuments in the modern city in ‘Great Men’s Houses’ and ‘Abbeys and Cathedrals.’ Through these essays Woolf moves away from the homogenised consumer culture of Oxford Street to the memorialised homes of Thomas Carlyle and John Keats, and then to the monumentalised individuals enshrined in Westminster Abbey and St Paul’s Cathedral. Much like Woolf’s biographical writings, discussed in Chapter 1, these essays explore society’s desire for public heroes and heroines, for celebrities to idolise and gossip about, while questioning the patriarchal values by which individuals are deemed worthy of such commemoration. They also conversely indicate an anxiety about the erosion of individualism associated with the shift from an aristocratic to a democratic age. Woolf’s unease with society’s desire to elevate selected individuals, usually male, and the qualities by which they are judged to be ‘great’ is pertinently addressed in *Good Housekeeping* to readers familiar with the hero worship of this magazine’s celebrity homes features and the idolisation of the rich and famous in its gossip-style pages.

In the third essay of her *London Scene* series, ‘Great Men’s Houses,’ Woolf mimics the format of *Good Housekeeping*’s frequent features on the homes of famous people. Her article corresponds, for example, to a furnishing and decorating item titled ‘A Home of Poets’ printed in the same issue as Woolf’s ‘Great Men’s Houses,’ which

¹²⁹ Cuddy-Keane, *Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, 47.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

describes the residence of Algernon Swinburne and Theodore Watts-Dunton with photographs to show 'how Mrs. Watts-Dunton has recently adapted the old house to modern requirements.'¹³¹ Woolf's essay superficially follows the framework of 'A Home of Poets' by describing the interiors of the former houses of Carlyle and Keats, but her depiction of the domestic arrangements in Carlyle's Chelsea home immediately strikes the reader as less celebratory in tone.¹³² Carlyle's house is portrayed as a dismal Victorian home, lit with 'yellow shaft[s] of London light' and everywhere marked with signs of the daily battle 'mistress and maid fought against dirt and cold for cleanliness and warmth.'¹³³ Despite their comparative wealth, there is little time for leisure for the house's residents as they are all employed in the industry of the home. Woolf satirises the Carlyles' living conditions with Dickensian detail; 'Carlyle groan[s], as he wrestle[s] with his history, on a horsehair chair,' Mrs Carlyle 'cough[s] in the large four-poster hung with maroon curtains in which she was born,' and 'one unfortunate maid' toils to serve the 'two [...] most nervous and exacting people of their time.'¹³⁴ As both Squier and McVicker have noted, the depiction of 5 Cheyne Row as 'not so much a dwelling-place as a battlefield—the scene of labour, effort and perpetual struggle' for the house's women discloses Woolf's criticism of Carlyle and the oppressive patriarchy for which he stood.¹³⁵ 'Great Men's Houses' represents a development from Woolf's early biographical essays such as 'Haworth, November, 1904,' discussed in Chapter 1, in which descriptions of the physical environment and personal belongings evoke the lives of a house's inhabitants.¹³⁶ In this later essay Woolf uses her portrayal of the interior of the Carlyles' home to evoke the wider social context of their living habits, a shift that indicates her movement towards cultural criticism at this time. By highlighting the discomforts, absurdities and oppressive domestic arrangements of Carlyle's house, Woolf encourages a reassessment of the lives and values of this masculine cultural heritage.

¹³¹ 'A Home of Poets,' *Good Housekeeping*, March 1932, 30-31.

¹³² Squier notes that Woolf's essay 'subverted the demands of the standard journalistic house tour' in *Woolf and London*, 52.

¹³³ Virginia Woolf, 'Great Men's Houses,' in *E* 5, 294-295.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 295. Squier reads Woolf's essay as 'an ironic challenge to the values implicit in Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes [and] Hero-Worship*' (*Woolf and London*, 52). Woolf's presentation of 'Carlyle's relationship with Jane Welsh,' McVicker argues, 'is more like that of a tyrant than a partner; the essay suggests that the monumentalization of this great man is in fact a celebration of a tyrannical tradition' ('Six Essays on London Life,' 2: 150).

¹³⁶ See Chapter 1, 45-47.

Andrea P. Zemgulys details Woolf's unease with the turn-of-the-century vogue for memorialising nineteenth-century literary and historic sites. London County Council's desire to preserve the relics of London's nineteenth-century intellectual history created an "'aristocracy"' of Chelsea's artists' residences' that prompted docile idolisation of their owners and the patriarchal and imperialist values they often represented.¹³⁷ Woolf felt particularly conflicted towards Carlyle's house due to the role that her father, Leslie Stephen, had played in ensuring its conservation. Stephen had 'spearheaded' the Carlyle Memorial Trust, the group responsible for turning Carlyle's house into a museum during 1894-1895.¹³⁸ In an influential letter to *The Times* on 31 December 1894, Stephen 'argu[ed] for the historic value of the house of this "man of genius"' and 'plead[ed] for monetary help in preserving the Carlyle home.'¹³⁹ In his commentary on Woolf's 1909 sketch of 'Carlyle's House' David Bradshaw contends that Woolf's trip to the property on 23 February 1909, the day after the fifth anniversary of Leslie Stephen's death, 'may have been an attempt to reach back to her father.'¹⁴⁰ She evidently continued to feel a link to the house later in life, ambivalently contributing a guinea to the Carlyle House Fund on 11 June 1933 with the qualifying note; 'I feel much more sympathy with Mrs Carlyle than with Mr, [...] I believe if your circular put more stress on her, you would wring more money from our purses.'¹⁴¹ Despite her personal ties to the property, even in 1909 Woolf found Carlyle's house unsatisfactory. 'Cheyne Row is spoilt,' she asserted, 'and Carlyle's house already has the look of something forcibly preserved; it is incongruous now, set between respectable family mansions.'¹⁴² In 'Great Men's Houses' Woolf expands her negative depiction of 5 Cheyne Row to encompass a critique of Carlyle, illustrating the significance of Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* essays in the development of her cultural criticism. Here her unflattering portrayal of the property undermines the enshrining of both Carlyle and his house as 'great' and questions the nineteenth-century impulse, epitomised by her father's involvement in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the

¹³⁷ Andrea P. Zemgulys, "'Night and Day Is Dead": Virginia Woolf in London "Literary and Historic",' *Twentieth Century Literature* 46: 1 (2000): 69.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*; internal quotation taken from Leslie Stephen, 'Carlyle's House at Chelsea,' *The Times*, 31 December 1894, 6.

¹⁴⁰ David Bradshaw, Commentary on 'Carlyle's House,' in *Carlyle's House and Other Sketches*, by Virginia Woolf, ed. David Bradshaw (London: Hesperus, 2003), 26.

¹⁴¹ *L* 5: 196.

¹⁴² Virginia Woolf, 'Carlyle's House,' in *Carlyle's House and Other Sketches*, 3.

Carlyle Memorial Trust and paralleled by the idolisation of celebrities and their homes in the pages of 1930s *Good Housekeeping*, to monumentalise the experiences and achievements of individuals.

The practice of making monuments of individuals is similarly critiqued by Woolf in 'Abbeys and Cathedrals.' Touring St Paul's Cathedral Woolf's narrator contemplates 'the dignified reposing room to which great statesmen and men of action retire,' noting 'Nelson looks a little smug.'¹⁴³ 'Here civic virtue and civic greatness are ensconced securely,' she asserts, yet her portrayal of Nelson's statue as 'smug' suggests an irreverent attitude towards the monumentalised individuals that stand before her 'to accept the thanks and applause of their fellow-citizens.'¹⁴⁴ Four years earlier, Woolf similarly described the wax effigies of dead royalty in Westminster Abbey as a 'strange muddle and miscellany of objects both hallowed and ridiculous' in 'Waxworks at the Abbey,' an essay printed in the *New Republic* on 11 April 1928.¹⁴⁵ When Woolf's third *Good Housekeeping* essay shifts to Westminster Abbey to depict its statues of 'Kings and Queens, poets and statesmen,' her narrator cannot help questioning whether it is 'through their virtues that these dead have come here.'¹⁴⁶ 'Often they have been violent; often they have been vicious,' she considers; '[o]ften it is only the greatness of their birth that has exalted them.'¹⁴⁷ These apparently idle musings on the role of statues in our society foreshadow Woolf's later in-depth analysis of the role that commemorative clothing and ceremony play in glorifying and maintaining a hierarchical patriarchal order in *Three Guineas*.

In "'This is the House of Commons",' the fifth essay of Woolf's *Good Housekeeping* series, the narrator openly calls us to 'give up making statues and inscribing them with impossible virtues.'¹⁴⁸ 'Let us rebuild the world then as a splendid hall,' she rousingly asserts, imagining this communal space as a symbol of the levelling of the classes in modern-day politics: 'Let us see whether democracy which makes halls cannot surpass the aristocracy which carved statues.'¹⁴⁹ Yet the narrator cannot quite

¹⁴³ Virginia Woolf, 'Abbeys and Cathedrals,' in *E* 5, 302.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Virginia Woolf, 'Waxworks at the Abbey,' in *E* 4, 542.

¹⁴⁶ Woolf, 'Abbeys and Cathedrals,' 303.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Virginia Woolf, "'This is the House of Commons,'" in *E* 5, 327.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 327-328.

prevent her ‘corrupt mind soaked with habit’ from continually associating the Commons with the presence of aristocratic individuals; ‘Here stood King Charles when they sentenced him to death,’ she reflects, ‘here the Earl of Essex [...] and Sir Thomas More.’¹⁵⁰ ‘The mind, it seems,’ she admits at the close of “‘This is the House of Commons”,’ ‘loves the flashing eye, the arched brow, the abnormal, the particular, the splendid human being.’¹⁵¹ Her narrator laments the loss of personality in politics – the monumental figures of Pitt and Burke – and the age in which ‘[i]ndividuality was allowed to unfold itself.’¹⁵² Despite her strong critique of the aristocratic value system by which past eras have made monuments of individuals, Cuddy-Keane notes, Woolf harbours anxieties about the loss of individualism in a democratic society and the need to find time and space to escape the standardising influence of modern mass culture.¹⁵³ In ‘Great Men’s Houses’ and ‘Abbeys and Cathedrals,’ Woolf closes her essays with a pastoral scene through which the narrator can escape both aristocratic monumentalising and the modern crowd.

Sarker locates Woolf’s patriotism in her love of London, but Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* essays also reveal her attachment to the world outside the urban, industrialised city.¹⁵⁴ Woolf’s attitude to London at the time of writing this series was characteristically ambivalent. Having spent Christmas at Rodmell with flu, the Woolfs returned to London in the New Year, spending the majority of early 1931 in the city but with frequent weekend visits back to Sussex. Woolf initially resented the increased claims on her time associated with the move to Tavistock Square. ‘[A]lready we are committed to “see” 6 people before Monday,’ she wrote in her diary on the day of their return.¹⁵⁵ To Vita Sackville-West the following day she remarked: ‘O Lord London is a horror! back 24 hours and 24 visitors telephones and general scrimmage.’¹⁵⁶ While her attitude to the city at this time was unenthusiastic, Woolf’s feelings towards the countryside were equally changeable. In a letter to Molly MacCarthy on 30 January Woolf described ‘Sussex [as] a mere swamp.’¹⁵⁷ Two days later, in contrast, writing to

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 328.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 327.

¹⁵³ Cuddy-Keane, *Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, 47.

¹⁵⁴ Sarker, ‘Locating a Native Englishness,’ 6-7.

¹⁵⁵ *D* 4: 5.

¹⁵⁶ *L* 4: 278.

¹⁵⁷ *L* 4: 285.

Margaret Llewelyn Davies, she reflected: ‘lord, the rush of London—I sometimes long for nothing but Rodmell, even in this damp.’¹⁵⁸ These quotations show how Woolf continually responds to London and the countryside in relation to one another. While writing *The London Scene*, as was the case through much of her life, Woolf had positive and negative feelings towards both. Her letters indicate an enjoyment of the bustle of her frenetic life in London in full swing and a sense of importance in the urgency with which she had to keep engagements. When at Rodmell she was equally delighted with the countryside. She wrote to Ethel Smyth on 7 April of ‘the absurd and irrational happiness of our lives [...] we giggle and joke, and go and poke at roots and plant beds of nasturtium.’¹⁵⁹ At this time, it is perhaps the countryside that Woolf took most pleasure in; ‘“I’m the happiest woman in England” I said to Leonard yesterday,’ Woolf wrote while at Monks House.¹⁶⁰ Despite their title, the *London Scene* essays often turn to the pastoral as Woolf evokes the lost rural landscape of England in order to describe the urban landscape that has replaced it.

The sentimental portrayal of Keats’s home in the suburb of Hampstead in ‘Great Men’s Houses’ serves to highlight Woolf’s negative description of Carlyle’s Chelsea home. While the urbanised home of the Carlyles is a tyrant to be fought against, Keats’s house is presented as a ‘little green plot,’ ‘furnished rather with light and shadow than with chairs and tables,’ and complemented by its environment rather than struggling to conquer it.¹⁶¹ Woolf presents Keats’s cottage as a pre-industrial refuge from ‘the traffic of life’ in which its owner was able to ‘[sit] on the chair in the window [...] and turn[] the page without haste though his time was short.’¹⁶² In contrast to the commercial spaces depicted in the previous two essays, Hampstead ‘is not a place where one makes money, or goes when one has money to spend.’¹⁶³ ‘Abbeys and Cathedrals’ concludes on a similarly escapist note as the narrator retreats to read in a public garden that was once a graveyard (Clarke suggests ‘[Woolf] is likely to have had in mind St George’s Gardens behind Brunswick Square’).¹⁶⁴ Cuddy-Keane notes that this essay ends ‘with a trope of substitution: the public garden in place of the public

¹⁵⁸ *L* 4: 287.

¹⁵⁹ *L* 4: 303.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Woolf, ‘Great Men’s Houses,’ 297.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁶⁴ See *E* 5, 306, *n* 10.

monument, the ordinary individual in place of the heroic statue.’¹⁶⁵ This analysis might be expanded to include ‘Great Men’s Houses,’ the final paragraph of which substitutes literary monuments for the sight of ‘the usual young man [...] clasping to his arms the usual young woman’ on a bench on Parliament Hill.¹⁶⁶

In her *London Scene* essays ‘[Woolf] argues the need to recuperate individualism as an antidote to the standardization of modern life,’ Cuddy-Keane observes, describing the public garden where Woolf’s narrator seeks refuge in ‘Abbeys and Cathedrals’ as ‘a little oasis ... [that] argues the need to carve out personal space, for quiet living, for reading, in the midst of the modern mass democratic world.’¹⁶⁷ With ‘benches under trees for mothers and nursemaids to sit on, while the children bowl hoops and play hopscotch in safety,’ Woolf evokes a Blakeian inner-city idyll of innocence within the ‘full tide and race of human life,’ a place where ‘one might drowse away the first days of spring or the last days of autumn without feeling too keenly the stir of youth or the sadness of old age.’¹⁶⁸ William Blake presented religious buildings as destroying the freedom of the green by filling it ‘with graves, / And tomb-stones where flowers should be’ but such religious spaces have since provided modern London’s only sanctuaries in Woolf’s portrayal.¹⁶⁹ In these old graveyards ‘tombstones no longer serve to mark the graves,’ ‘[f]lowers light up the turf,’ and Blake’s ‘priests in black gowns ... walking their rounds’ have been replaced by a gardener.¹⁷⁰ The Romantic paralleling of pastoral settings with freedom and churches with oppression has been complicated by the arrival of more diverse centres of control operating in modern London. Not only church and state, but also fading imperialist structures and rising consumer capitalism battle for more subtle control in industrialised London. In this backdrop, Woolf’s narrator avoids the power struggles of the modern city with a withdrawal into pastoral England. This escape is only a temporary retreat into a place

¹⁶⁵ Cuddy-Keane, *Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, 49.

¹⁶⁶ Woolf, ‘Great Men’s Houses,’ 298.

¹⁶⁷ Cuddy-Keane, *Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, 47-49.

¹⁶⁸ Woolf, ‘Abbeys and Cathedrals,’ 304-305.

¹⁶⁹ William Blake, ‘The Garden of Love,’ in *William Blake*, ed. Michael Mason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 273.

¹⁷⁰ Woolf, ‘Abbeys and Cathedrals,’ 304; Blake, ‘The Garden of Love,’ 273.

located in a past era, however, where ‘one might [...] read *Pamela* from cover to cover,’ but where it is impossible, and undesirable, to stay in modern times.¹⁷¹

Women, Power and Politics

The last two essays of Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* series encourage the female reader to explore her position within the socio-political structures of contemporary England. “‘This is the House of Commons’” leads the reader into the home of British political debate, while ‘Portrait of a Londoner’ looks back to the age of the Victorian hostess and recalls her role in facilitating and directing the conversation and opinions of the governing classes. McVicker has argued that these two essays should be read together as an evocation of women’s new-found freedoms and responsibilities as voters now that they have entered the public political arena. ‘Woolf’s repetition of “our” and “common”’ in the fifth essay ‘implicates “us”,’ McVicker asserts, as female readers who must begin to accept accountability for the current state of the country.¹⁷² In comparison to other contributors writing in *Good Housekeeping* at this time, however, Woolf’s approach to political matters in this essay is not markedly didactic. Her cultural criticism resolutely avoids moralising, prompting the female reader to explore women’s role in contemporary politics for herself.

Seven months before “‘This is the House of Commons’” was printed in October of 1932, the March issue of *Good Housekeeping* contained a similar article written by the politician, writer and old acquaintance of Woolf, Mary Agnes (Molly) Hamilton. Hamilton had been the Labour MP for Blackburn from 1929-1931 (a seat she won with the most amount of votes of any female Labour candidate) and had presented the first broadcast of the BBC’s *The Week in Westminster* in 1929 (a radio programme which aimed to increase women’s political awareness).¹⁷³ Woolf had known Hamilton during the war and in the years following it as a pacifist journalist, campaigner, and a speaker at Richmond’s Co-operative Guild meetings.¹⁷⁴ The essay Hamilton wrote for *Good*

¹⁷¹ Woolf, ‘Abbeys and Cathedrals,’ 304.

¹⁷² McVicker, ‘Six Essays on London Life,’ 2: 158 (emphasis in original).

¹⁷³ Information from Janet E. Grenier, ‘Hamilton [*née* Adamson], Mary Agnes (1882-1966),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Web site and database] (Oxford University Press, 2004-2007); available from <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39455>>; accessed 22 June 2007.

¹⁷⁴ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), 328, 360.

Housekeeping, ‘Mother Westminster,’ also provides a tour of the Houses of Parliament and discusses democracy, but in this essay our guide is an insider.¹⁷⁵ Although Hamilton does not emphasise her insider’s role within the essay, instead presenting a visitor’s tour like those given to school children, her previous role as an MP assures her position as an authority in the essay. Hamilton is mentor to her readers, guiding them through and simplifying the parliamentary environment before finally advocating its strengths with a concluding paragraph in praise of the democratic system. Woolf’s essay, in contrast, presents a far more ambivalent view of modern democracy. McVicker has noted how Woolf’s ‘choice of the future tense’ in her closing wish that ‘democracy will come’ in this essay ‘must have stood out to the 1932 reader, who no doubt believed that democracy already *had* come to England.’¹⁷⁶ In fact, as other articles discussing the failings of democracy in *Good Housekeeping* indicate, there is no reason to suppose that the 1932 reader would ‘no doubt’ have been shocked by Woolf’s assertion. More startling, perhaps, than Woolf’s suggestion that democracy has yet to come to England, is her depiction of government as an insular society from which women are excluded. This inaccurate portrayal overlooks the presence of women in parliament, like Molly Hamilton, who had been permitted to stand as MPs since 1918.

The only female presence in Woolf’s essay is that of the narrator restricted in the Stranger’s Gallery by the ‘blue giant’ policeman, despite the fact that there were fifteen women in the House of Commons when Woolf wrote her article who she might have mentioned as examples to inspire her female readership had she wished.¹⁷⁷ Instead Woolf pointedly omits to represent the existence of governing women, highlighting the fact that women were still hugely underrepresented in government at this time. Her female narrator is an uninformed observer rather than a political role model. “‘This is the House of Commons’” is concerned less with teaching its readers about women’s role in the political system than contemplating how the political system appears to women looking in. The narrator discusses the changing face of democracy, poking fun at the ‘commonplace, snub-nosed, red-jowled, squires, lawyers, [and] men of business’

¹⁷⁵ Mary Agnes Hamilton, “‘Mother Westminster’,” *Good Housekeeping*, March 1932, 18-19, 100-102.

¹⁷⁶ McVicker, ‘Six Essays on London Life,’ 2: 162 (emphasis in original).

¹⁷⁷ Woolf, “‘This is the House of Commons’,” 328; for the names, parties and election dates of women in parliament in 1931 see ‘Women in the House of Commons,’ a House of Commons Information Office Factsheet; available from <<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/M04B.pdf>>; accessed 16 April 2010.

who operate it, and considering its limitations from the point of view of an ignorant, yet therefore objective, female outsider.¹⁷⁸ Contemporary politicians are depicted as disappointingly ordinary. ‘Everybody has been well fed and given a good education doubtless,’ but one has to remind oneself that ‘this is the House of Commons,’ because the people who control ‘the destinies of the world’ do not appear to be ‘a whit more judicious, or more dignified, or more respectable-looking than any other assembly of citizens met to debate parish business or give prizes for fat oxen.’¹⁷⁹ Woolf’s presentation of modern-day politicians reflects her reaction to meeting Ramsay MacDonald at a party in 1930. Although he was famously Britain’s first prime minister from a working-class background, Woolf found MacDonald ‘an unimpressive man; eyes disappointing; rather heavy [...] no son of the people; sunk; grumpy; self-important; wore a black waistcoat; had some mediocrity of personality.’¹⁸⁰ In her essay, this sense of disenchantment with contemporary politicians serves to help her ignorant female narrator to enter political debate.

The narrator is able to begin to question the suitability of the politicians in front of her to govern precisely because she is unimpressed by them. She is dismissive of both the ‘youth who seems to have rolled out of a punt on the river’ and the ‘stubby little man who, to judge by his accent, must have been shovelling sugar into little blue bags behind a counter before he came to Westminster.’¹⁸¹ These portrayals indicate equal suspicion of the automatic entry of the university-classes into parliament and the presence of middle-class, social climbers amongst the ruling elite. However, the narrator moves on to assert that despite their unappealingly provincial appearance the politicians she sees are fittingly business-like for their task of addressing not only ‘the small separate ears of [...] the House of Commons,’ but also ‘men and women in factories, in shops, in farms [...] in Indian villages.’¹⁸² Woolf celebrates the arrival of the collective to modern politics and asks us to ‘see whether democracy [...] cannot surpass the aristocracy.’¹⁸³ This conclusion is phrased in compelling language but remains an uncomfortable reconciliation and is far from wholehearted. In the final

¹⁷⁸ Woolf, “‘This is the House of Commons,’” 326.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 325.

¹⁸⁰ *D* 3: 283.

¹⁸¹ Woolf, “‘This is the House of Commons,’” 326.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 327.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 327-328.

paragraph, Woolf ‘checks our dreaming process’ with the admission that we still long for ‘the abnormal, the particular’ over the collective, and the frivolous suggestion that we should therefore hope that ‘democracy will come, but only a hundred years hence, when we are beneath the grass.’¹⁸⁴ Instead of expounding the assets of Britain’s democratic system, criticising its flaws or campaigning for women’s involvement in politics, Woolf’s essay provokes the female reader to consider her opinion about the people who govern her and to question her attitude to the male-dominated system by which the country is ruled.

In the sixth and final essay, ‘Portrait of a Londoner,’ Woolf continues the theme of the loss of individuality in modern London, while monumentalising the figure of one ordinary figure. The reader moves from the public male political arena into the private drawing-room of a ‘true Cockney.’¹⁸⁵ The warm red and grey illustrations that accompany this article, depicting a drawing-room scene with an archetypal Victorian hostess and five other figures waited on by a maid, are complemented by the sentimentalised editorial caption: ‘Even London itself could not keep Mrs. Crowe alive for ever—but over her tea-table she reigns once more in the vivid phrases of this essay by Virginia Woolf.’¹⁸⁶ Woolf’s Victorian heroine is irreverently but affectionately described in this essay as tied to the home, and more particularly, to her armchair by the fire from which ‘she poured out tea.’¹⁸⁷ We are told that ‘[t]o figure Mrs. Crowe in her black dress and her veil [...] walking in a field among turnips or climbing a hill where cows were grazing, is beyond the scope of the wildest imagination.’¹⁸⁸ She is ‘a collector of relationships’ whose memory for gossip allowed her ‘to give a family and domestic character to gatherings, for it is surprising how many people are twentieth cousins, if they did but know it.’¹⁸⁹ The prose takes on an Austen-like tone and syntax. The description of how ‘the subscription demanded’ to be admitted into Mrs Crowe’s house and social gatherings ‘was the payment of so many items of gossip every year’ is reminiscent of eighteenth-century parlour games such as Frank Churchill’s demand at the Box Hill picnic in Austen’s *Emma* that each guest must say either ‘one thing very

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 328.

¹⁸⁵ Virginia Woolf, ‘Portrait of a Londoner,’ in *E* 5, 593.

¹⁸⁶ Editorial billing of ‘Portrait of a Londoner’ in *Good Housekeeping*, December 1932, 28.

¹⁸⁷ Woolf, ‘Portrait of a Londoner,’ 593.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 595.

clever, ... two things moderately clever or three things very dull indeed.’¹⁹⁰ Mrs Crowe is a master of this style of etiquette-bound conversation, which she sees ‘must be general’ and ‘about everything’ because if it were too deep or too clever, ‘somebody was sure to feel out of it, and to sit balancing his tea-cup, saying nothing.’¹⁹¹ Woolf pokes fun at such shallow talk, and the conventions which required it with her description of how ‘if anyone said a brilliant thing it was felt to be rather a breach of etiquette—an accident that one ignored, like a fit of sneezing, or some catastrophe with a muffin.’¹⁹² Yet for all her satire of the restrictive lifestyle and social codes she represents, the essay closes with sadness at the death of Mrs Crowe. ‘Mrs. Crowe is dead,’ Woolf concludes, ‘and London—no, though London still exists, London will never be the same city again.’¹⁹³

This sentimental representation of an Angel in the House figure contrasts with the anti-Victorianism of the other essays of Woolf’s *Good Housekeeping* series, and with her condemnation of this ideal of domestic womanhood in her 1931 speech to the L&NSWS and throughout the 1930s.¹⁹⁴ Equally troubling is the sudden shift of genre that occurs in the series with this piece which reads as a short story rather than an article. Although there had been fictional aspects to the previous essays, ‘Portrait of a Londoner’ loses the factual quality lent to the other texts by the frequent references to public places and people. The essay can be read as a pair with “‘This is the House of Commons’” as an evocation of women’s new-found freedoms and responsibilities now they have entered the public political arena, but it also stands apart on its own as a whimsical memoir of the social conventions of Woolf’s childhood and adolescence. This ambiguity is the result in part of Woolf’s association of the demise of Mrs Crowe with a loss of order and sense of definite purpose with which women were born a generation earlier. Without the figure of Mrs Crowe, women have no defined role. Instead, they face the challenge of choosing and structuring their own future. The absence of Mrs Crowe is accompanied by the loss of her servant – the last paragraph details that now ‘Maria [does] not open the door’ – further emphasising the changing roles of women as the post-war decline in the number of women entering domestic

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; Jane Austen, *Emma* (London: Penguin, 1994), 280.

¹⁹¹ Woolf, ‘Portrait of a Londoner,’ 594.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ See Virginia Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’ typescript, M.70, in *VW: MA*, 4-5.

service reflects the greater career opportunities available to working-class women in the new era and the change of lifestyle for the archetypal middle-class hostess.¹⁹⁵ At the close of her *London Scene* series, Woolf playfully reminds her middle-class *Good Housekeeping* audience that they face the simultaneously daunting and liberating task of choosing their own future and, of course, of doing their own housework. The stable gender roles of the old city have been replaced by the flexibility, transiency and freedom of the new. In this context, the shift in genre that takes place with this essay heightens the reader's impression of the series as a fragmentary portrayal of Britain's capital and coincides with the narrator's final inability to express the enigma of the modern city.

Conclusion

““Golly!” I said to myself, as I sat in the train travelling westward,’ Aldous Huxley declares at the end of ‘Greater and Lesser London.’¹⁹⁶ In this final essay of Huxley’s 1931 series for *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine* he recalls his attendance at a parliamentary debate on national economy in Westminster before switching to a short description of visiting a Jewish slaughterhouse and drinking tea at a house ‘in a street of rag merchants’ in the east end of London.¹⁹⁷ Huxley wonders: ‘If I had been born and lived my life in this street of rags behind the Docks, should I be playing Bach ... should I even have heard of Schubert?’¹⁹⁸ He considers that had he been born into the docklands he would have been unlikely to ever enter ‘the other London’ of wealth, art, power and opportunity that occupies the west of the city.¹⁹⁹ ‘And I was proposing to spend the rest of the evening in Bloomsbury – not merely geographically, but also culturally in Bloomsbury,’ Huxley ponders on the Underground: ““Golly!” I said again.”²⁰⁰ This final reflection on the geographical and cultural divisions of London situates Woolf and her set in a different London to that of the struggling slaughterhouse manager, the male prostitutes, or indeed the Houses of Parliament. Nevertheless her *Good Housekeeping*

¹⁹⁵ Woolf, ‘Portrait of a Londoner,’ 597.

¹⁹⁶ Aldous Huxley, ‘Greater and Lesser London,’ in *Hidden Huxley*, 95.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

articles reveal Woolf, like Huxley, trying to move beyond her own cultural space and addressing a new, extended female audience.

Read within their original place of publication Woolf's London essays punningly suggest the need for a re-evaluation of British 'housekeeping' both at a domestic and a national level. The first two essays consider the choices of the individual consumer against the operations of commercial business; the third and sixth essays present the workings and failings of the domestic households of Keats, Carlyle and Mrs Crowe; the fourth and fifth essays investigate the changing roles of England's institutional 'households' – the Houses of Parliament and the Church. Far from representing a 'restrictive frame' for Woolf's London essays as Sarker contended, *Good Housekeeping* shaped and provided a receptive audience for her cultural analysis in these texts.²⁰¹ The primary benefit Woolf received from writing these articles was financial, yet it is tempting to suppose that Woolf might also have viewed her acceptance of this commission as a positive opportunity to communicate with the middlebrow women readers of this magazine. As my brief overview of *Good Housekeeping* demonstrates, this magazine provided a perfect vehicle for Woolf's growing cultural criticism of Britain's political, intellectual and commercial hub. The various interactions between Woolf's *London Scene* articles and the editorial, feature and advertising content of *Good Housekeeping* suggest she knew enough of this publication to anticipate the type of articles and advertising material that would surround her contributions and carefully considered how to engage the female readers of this publication in her feminist analysis of patriarchal Britain. Written in the wake of *The Waves*, following Woolf's conception of a sequel to *A Room of One's Own*, these essays disclose her desire to frame herself as a cultural critic in the early months of 1931. Through her *Good Housekeeping* series Woolf draws a likeness of the city to which she has access and sketches out her evolving investigation into the changes she has witnessed, as a woman, in the social, political and economic power structures of Britain's capital.

²⁰¹ Sarker, 'Locating a Native Englishness,' 6.

3

The Evolution of *Three Guineas*: Woolf's Critiques of Patriarchy, 1931-1938

Introduction

On 3 June 1938, the ‘coming out day’ of *Three Guineas*, Woolf recorded ‘the end of six years floundering’ in her diary, by which, she declared, she was ‘lumping the Years and 3 Gs together as one book—as indeed they are.’¹ Woolf’s professional life in the 1930s was dominated by the research and writing of *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, two distinct texts that evidence the evolution of her cultural criticism through this eventful decade. In response to her statement that the two are ‘one book,’ the novel and the polemic have been correspondingly ‘lumped’ together by her critics. The shared history of these works has attracted substantial attention, although the exact relationship between *The Years* and *Three Guineas* during their extended parallel development remains unclear. Woolf’s comment dates the beginning of her ‘six years floundering, striving, much agony, [and] some ecstasy’ to 1932, in the autumn of which year she began drafting *The Pargiters*, a ‘novel-essay.’ This unfinished text, consisting of alternate critical essays and fictional chapters, represents the first draft of both *The Years* and *Three Guineas*. Yet the genesis of all three texts, *The Pargiters*, the published novel, and the published polemic, can be traced back even further to Woolf’s conception of ‘an entire new book—a sequel to a Room of Ones [sic] Own’ the day before delivering her ‘Professions for Women’ speech to the Junior Council of the London and National Society for Women’s Service (L&NSWS) on 21 January 1931.² While the evolutionary process that connects the speech to *The Pargiters* and then to *The Years* has been frequently discussed (most notably by Grace Radin), there has been no thorough critical or editorial investigation into how *Three Guineas* evolved from this pre-text and *The Years*.³ This chapter uses genetic criticism to examine the development of *Three Guineas* and Woolf’s feminist-pacifist critique of patriarchy in

¹ D 5: 147-148.

² D 4: 6.

³ Grace Radin, *Virginia Woolf's The Years: The Evolution of a Novel* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

this text through the diverse draft materials she produced relating to these works during 1931-1938.

My last chapter argued that the transitional early months of 1931 were pivotal to the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism for at this moment she shifted her intellectual focus from high modernist fiction to expanding her feminist analysis of Britain's social, political and economic systems and values. To her contemporaries, however, Woolf did not emerge as a cultural critic until the end of the 1930s. Her principal output during the earlier part of this decade, with the exception of a handful of essays and speeches including 'Professions for Women,' the preface to *Life As We Have Known It* and 'A Letter to a Young Poet,' did not necessarily appear any more politicised to her first readers than her works of the 1920s. The ethereal narrative of *The Waves*, playful literary commentary of *The Common Reader: Second Series*, and whimsical spoof life-writing of *Flush* might in fact have seemed to signify a retreat from the explicit feminism of *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf's preceding monograph. *The Years*, now commonly read as a work of social analysis, was received enthusiastically at its publication chiefly as a family chronicle novel.⁴ Thus, Woolf's commitment to cultural criticism in her last decade passed largely without notice from her contemporaries until the release of *Three Guineas* in 1938. Indeed, the implications of Woolf's feminist politics in this text and throughout 1930-1941 were not widely recognised or explored until long after her death. The publication of Woolf's diary, letters, and extensive work completed on her manuscript drafts of *The Years* in the late 1970s and early 1980s were fundamental to establishing her reputation as a focussed cultural critic in this period. The early interest of feminist-historicist critics in *The Pargiters* was crucial to raising our current awareness of the sustained sociological research Woolf undertook during her writing of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* in the 1930s.⁵

⁴ With nearly 38,000 copies sold in the United States within the first six months, *The Years* became an American best-seller in part, Julia Briggs contends, 'due to its naturalistic mode, its representation of "real" life, "real" people, and a familiar middle-class world'; see Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (London: Penguin, 2006), 301. To Woolf these 'immense sales in the States meant that [*The Years*] had been mistaken for just the kind of English family saga she did not want it to be confused with,' Hermione Lee observes in her introduction to *Y*, xxvi.

⁵ See essays collected in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80: 2 (1977); a special edition dedicated to research arising from archival work on *The Pargiters* drafts held at the New York Public Library (NYPL).

The abrupt transformation in critical evaluations of Woolf's late output in the late 1970s and early 1980s supports Brenda R. Silver's strong argument for 'the role that textual criticism, in particular the editing and reception of manuscript versions of Woolf's novels, have played in altering our image of the "author" and the way we understand her politics and art.'⁶ Yet 'more than thirty years after the feminist recuperation of Woolf began,' Rebecca Wisor observes, 'no transcription or edition of the holograph and typescript fragments of *Three Guineas* or its sister text, *The Years*, has been published.'⁷ The absence of a full published holograph facsimile or transcription for either work 'is surprising given feminists' early attention to the holograph drafts of *The Years*,' and remarkable considering that facsimile holograph drafts or transcriptions have been published for all but one of Woolf's other works.⁸ Wisor suggests this omission may arise from 'the sheer extensiveness of the holograph documents,' their 'complex, fragmented nature' and the marked 'discrepancy between the pre-publication and published versions of [Woolf's] works ... [in] the thirties, the decade in which she was engaged in her most forceful critique of militarist, capitalist, fascist, patriarchal, and imperialist ideologies.'⁹ As Marcus notes in her recent edition of *Three Guineas*, '[f]urther work remains to be done on the manuscripts.'¹⁰ While this chapter cannot hope to fully investigate the diverse body of holographs, typescripts, page proofs and reading notes that Wisor desires to see explored in a 'post-eclectic' edition of *Three Guineas* (the possible methodology of which forms the central debate of her thought-provoking article), my study of *Three Guineas* endeavours to provide a valuable genetic survey of the growth of Woolf's analysis of patriarchy and fascism through the disparate and largely unexamined draft materials that document the evolution of this text.¹¹

⁶ Brenda R. Silver, 'Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice: Or, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf Part II,' in *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation*, ed. George Bornstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 194.

⁷ Rebecca Wisor, 'Versioning Virginia Woolf: Notes toward a Post-eclectic Edition of *Three Guineas*,' *Modernism/Modernity* 16: 3 (2009): 499. Mitchell A. Leaska has, however, transcribed and published the first volume and a half of the eight-volume manuscript catalogued in the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature at the NYPL as the holograph draft of *The Years* in *TP*. The last six volumes of *The Years* manuscript remain unpublished.

⁸ *Ibid.* There has also yet to be a published holograph facsimile or transcription of *Night and Day*.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Jane Marcus, introduction to *Three Guineas*, ed. Jane Marcus (New York: Harcourt, 2006), lxvi.

¹¹ In 'Versioning Virginia Woolf,' Wisor valuably debates the merits and limitations of three possible postmodernist editorial models available to future editors of *Three Guineas*: the genetic edition, the

This chapter adopts the editorial practices of genetic criticism to trace the genesis of the feminist-pacifist opinions Woolf voiced in *Three Guineas* through the draft materials relating to this polemic, her novel *The Years* and their shared pre-texts. My discussion questions the relationships between these works and examines the process by which Woolf came to combine her feminism with her pacifism at this point in the development of her late cultural criticism. Study of the links between the multiple fictional and critical texts connected to Woolf's major feminist political project of the 1930s highlights her extreme formal radicalism in this decade, shattering the popular perception produced by reading her novels in isolation from her criticism that Woolf abandoned modernist experimentalism at this time in favour of realism. Just as the controversial political arguments Woolf expressed in *Three Guineas* foreshadow the discussions of late twentieth-century feminist-pacifists, the complex tone and structure of her works in this decade anticipate the fragmented narrative voices and distorted genres of postmodern writing. Tracing the evolution of Woolf's critiques of patriarchy from her 'Professions for Women' speech through *The Pargiters* and *The Years* to *Three Guineas* fundamentally challenges the fact/fiction binary through which many critics view Woolf's oeuvre.¹² Woolf's famous declaration in the first essay of *The Pargiters*, 'I prefer, where truth is important, to write fiction,' should remind us that for Woolf factual truth and creative invention could be entirely compatible.¹³ Just as her early biographical writings, discussed in Chapter 1, indicate a willingness to blend history with imagination and to push the boundaries of genre, Woolf's late cultural criticism similarly displays a dissident, experimental drive to blur narrative with argument, fact with fiction, and to create new literary forms.

Before exploring this contention further this chapter opens with two brief introductory summaries; the first reviews previous critical discussion of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* while the second outlines the specific genetic methods adopted in this

parallel text edition and the fluid-text edition. Her imagined 'post-eclectic' edition of *Three Guineas* opposes the 'modernist, essentialist view of textuality that emphasizes ... the production of emended, definitive editions of texts,' according to which Woolf's works have historically been edited (498). Wisor instead desires an edition of *Three Guineas*, like Hans Walter Gabler's synoptic genetic edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (London: Garland, 1984), that 'showcase[s] the instability and plurality of ... [the] work as witnessed in its multiple textual states' (500).

¹² Consider, for example, Alice van Buren Kelley, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

¹³ *TP*, 9.

chapter with a reminder of the editorial and analytical principles that direct them. My examination of *The Years*, *Three Guineas* and the mass of pre-publication material that evidences the evolution of these works then unfolds in three further sections. The first section traces the early history of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* and the haphazard writing process through which these formally and politically radical texts emerged from the wreckage of *The Pargiters*. The second section scrutinises the surviving draft materials that evidence the evolution of *Three Guineas*, including the three scrapbooks of feminist and pacifist research that Woolf assembled during 1931-1937. Here I organise these documents into a possible chronology for the genesis and composition of Woolf's 1938 polemic. The final section illustrates how Woolf's feminist-pacifist stance developed over the course of her major cultural critical project of the 1930s. The innovative style and politics of *Three Guineas* are closely entwined, I will argue throughout this chapter, and evolved concurrently through her composition of *The Pargiters* and drafting of *The Years*.

Critical Discussion of *The Years* and *Three Guineas*

Critical reactions to both *The Years* and *Three Guineas* have varied significantly at different stages of the works' reception. *The Years* was a commercial success selling more copies than any of Woolf's previous works, but met a negative reception in the high-brow literary periodicals of the day.¹⁴ The criticisms levelled against the novel on its publication – that it was too 'poetic,' too 'trivial,' too distanced from 'external change' and the 'real effect of real events on people'¹⁵ – continued to hold in the decades following Woolf's death during which *The Years* was overlooked by critics, who focussed instead on her more lyrical novels of the 1920s.¹⁶ In the 1970s manuscript study of *The Pargiters* highlighted Woolf's radical aims for *The Years* and brought to light the suppression of her feminist and socialist criticism in the published

¹⁴ For an overview of contemporary critical responses to *The Years* in *Scrutiny*, *New Republic*, *Life and Letters Today* and the *Listener* see Madeline Moore, 'Virginia Woolf's *The Years* and Years of Adverse Male Reviewers,' *Women's Studies* 4 (1977): 247-263.

¹⁵ Moore, 'Woolf's *The Years*,' 252.

¹⁶ David Daiches described *The Years* as a failed attempt at a family chronicle novel in *Virginia Woolf* (London: Poetry London, 1945). '[S]uperficial resemblance though there may be between *The Years* and a work like *The Forsythe Saga*,' Daiches asserted, 'the difference between the two is far more striking. ... Woolf is not interested in chronicling the decline of a class, or in the differences between succeeding generations: her interest is still centred on her old theme, the flux of experience' (105-106).

novel. The publication of Mitchell A. Leaska's transcription of *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years* in 1978 was crucial to these reassessments through making accessible the first one and a half notebooks of Woolf's eight volume manuscript of *The Years*.¹⁷ Radin's insightful analysis of the novel's evolution, published in 1981, also discussed and made available two significant chunks cut from the novel at proof stage, one of which was set in wartime London.¹⁸ Subsequent re-evaluations of *The Years* and its treatment of sexual politics in the 1980s were enriched by the turn towards historicism in Woolf criticism at this time. Critics such as Warner, Squier and Zwerdling began to dissect and debate not only the novel's submerged feminism but also its success as a piece of socio-political commentary.¹⁹ In the early 1990s the temporary release of Woolf's works from copyright in Britain led to new editions and further discussion of the novel, often drawing on its relationship to *Three Guineas* to illustrate the link that *The Years* suggests between 'the structure of the Victorian household and the organization of society in twentieth-century Britain.'²⁰ Although *The Years* remains less read than Woolf's modernist novels of the 1920s, her subtle blending of experimental fictional techniques with social realism in this work is now largely recognised even if critics find the scope of her cultural criticism rather limited.

With its complex feminist-pacifist argument and awkward structural framework, *Three Guineas*, in contrast, remains a much debated text. The work received violently mixed reactions on publication, as detailed by Brenda Silver and Anna Snaith in their separate studies of responses to the book.²¹ Its feminist-pacifist stance was understood positively by some readers as an active position of protest, while others derisively portrayed her proclaimed neutrality as a failure to understand the gravity of the current situation of European political unrest. Some readers bypassed the anti-war sentiment of the work entirely, reacting with disbelief or anger towards her depiction of upper-

¹⁷ TP; see my list of abbreviations for full publication details of this volume, vi.

¹⁸ Radin, *The Evolution of a Novel*, 80-89; episodes cut from the galley proofs are printed in the appendix.

¹⁹ See Eric Warner, 'Re-considering *The Years*,' *North Dakota Quarterly* 48: 2 (1980): 16-30; Susan M. Squier, 'The Politics of City Space in *The Years*: Street Love, Pillar Boxes and Bridges,' in *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Macmillan, 1981), 216-237; Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (California: University of California Press, 1986).

²⁰ Lee, introduction to Y, xiv-xv.

²¹ See Brenda R. Silver, 'Three Guineas Before and After: Further Answers to Correspondents,' in *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 254-276; and Anna Snaith, 'Wide Circles: The *Three Guineas* Letters,' *Woolf Studies Annual* 6 (2000): 1-168.

middle-class women as socially and economically disadvantaged. Others felt her leftist discussion did not go far enough. Q. D. Leavis famously ridiculed Woolf's representation of the daughters of educated men as outsiders in a searing, and not entirely unjust, review of *Three Guineas* published in *Scrutiny* in September 1938.²² Woolf's concept of 'indifference' as a political tool from which 'certain actions must follow' that 'would materially help to prevent war' was challenging to readers unable or unwilling to grasp that her feminist complaints were part of a larger argument about women's ability to employ active non-violent force against militarism.²³

The controversial pacifism Woolf expressed in this work fell out of favour with the onset of World War II causing *Three Guineas* to disappear from most critical discussions of her output until the 1970s when the text was reclaimed by second-wave feminism. Since this recovery, extensive examinations by feminist critics such as Marcus, Bowlby, Silver and Black into the subversive style, structure and politics of this text have ensured the reinstatement of *Three Guineas* to Woolf's oeuvre.²⁴ The construction of a digital archive of the three scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings Woolf collected while working on this project, edited by Vara Neverow and Merry M. Pawlowski, provides numerous insights into the feminist social history Woolf was trying to write.²⁵ 'Today,' Briggs observes, '*Three Guineas* is generally recognized as a founding document in the history of gender studies.'²⁶ Yet the lack of a holograph facsimile or transcription of this work continues to attest, as Wisor identifies, to 'the long-standing bias among critics and publishers for Woolf's fiction—and quite specifically *against* the vitriolic *Three Guineas*.'²⁷ The taxing style and argument of *Three Guineas* leave literary critics and theorists from broader academic fields still debating the significance of Woolf's coded expressions of anger in this text.

²² Q. D. Leavis, 'Caterpillars of the Commonwealth, Unite!' *Scrutiny* 7 (1938): 203-214.

²³ *TG*, 129.

²⁴ Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); Brenda R. Silver, 'The Authority of Anger: *Three Guineas* as Case Study,' *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16: 2 (1991): 340-370; Naomi Black, *Virginia Woolf as Feminist* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004); Black's introduction and notes to *Three Guineas*, ed. Naomi Black (Oxford: Shakespeare Head Press, 2001) and Marcus's introduction and notes to *Three Guineas* (2006).

²⁵ Virginia Woolf, *The Three Guineas Scrapbooks: A Digital Archive*, ed. Vara Neverow and Merry M. Pawlowski [Web site and database] (California State University, 2001); available from <<http://www.csub.edu/woolf>>; accessed 6 May 2010.

²⁶ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, 310.

²⁷ Wisor, 'Versioning Virginia Woolf,' 499 (emphasis in original).

Critics have responded variously to the disconcerting style and structure of both *The Years* and *Three Guineas*. Alex Zwerdling blamed the ‘certain complexity of tone present in both books’ on the existence of two contradictory impulses in these works; ‘to vent her anger about the subjection of women and to conciliate the male audience she could never entirely ignore.’²⁸ The fractured shared history of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* is often cited to explain difficulties and inconsistencies in the narrative and argument of these works.²⁹ Charles G. Hoffmann first looked in detail at ‘Virginia Woolf’s Manuscript Revisions of *The Years*’ in 1969.³⁰ His article argued that although ‘there is only a general connection of theme between the lecture and the novel published some six years later ... the manuscript notebooks ... reveal that the original center of the novel was an exploration of the revolutionary changes that occurred in English society from the 1880’s to the 1930’s as illustrated by the succeeding generations of the Pargiter family.’³¹ This astute early reading of Woolf’s text is marred, however, by the mistaken assertion that ‘[e]xplicit factual commentary’ in *The Pargiters* ‘is limited to the essay portion of the manuscript.’³² This comment reflects Hoffmann’s necessarily limited focus in his article-length study on the ‘1880’ section of the manuscript with its alternate fact/fiction format and suggests that he has overlooked the integration of Woolf’s critical commentary with fiction in later volumes of the manuscript. Despite much further investigation into the relationship between the manuscript and printed version of *The Years* this concentration on the first two volumes of the manuscript continues, no doubt, primarily due to the accessibility of these sections after the publication of Leaska’s transcription in 1978. Hoffmann’s suggestion that the ‘[t]he “Essay” eventually was written and published as *Three Guineas*’ has been continually propagated by critics of the two works, while the relation between the fiction-only sections of *The Years* manuscript and *Three Guineas* has been largely

²⁸ Zwerdling, *Woolf and the Real World*, 243.

²⁹ In ‘Re-considering *The Years*’ Warner reads *The Years* as a failure because ‘[Woolf] ruthlessly scraped away any hint of interiority’ from *The Pargiters* manuscript (29). Marcus suggests that ‘the novel and the pamphlet and the speech, along with the reading notebooks, the scrapbooks, and the discarded proofs of *The Years*, make a huge documentary that never quite came off’ in her introduction to *Three Guineas* (2006), xlv.

³⁰ Charles G. Hoffmann, ‘Virginia Woolf’s Manuscript Revisions of *The Years*,’ *PMLA* 84: 1 (1969): 79-89.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

³² *Ibid.*, 81.

ignored.³³ A focus on the relationship between argument and illustration in Woolf's late cultural criticism, rather than the unhelpful fact/fiction binary, might serve to break down this division between the 'novel-essay' portion and later volumes of *The Pargiters*.

Julia Briggs is one of the few critics to detect the existence of links between the fictional episodes of the manuscript of the novel and the printed text of *Three Guineas*. She draws attention to a reference to 'three guineas' in the manuscript of *The Years* as the sizeable sum needed to see a doctor on Harley Street, evoked by Rose Pargiter as she and her two female cousins discuss the inability of most women to gain access to birth control in the draft version of '1910'.³⁴ Before setting out the 'problems of patriotism, and in particular the attitude of the state towards its women ... incisively in the third chapter of *Three Guineas*,' Briggs asserts, Woolf 'discussed them at length in the (extensively rewritten and largely abandoned) 1910 section of *The Years*.'³⁵ The final section of this chapter will build on these observations by highlighting how Woolf's explicit feminist-pacifist analyses were, as Briggs terms it, 'let go of' and 'deferred' through her writing of '1910'.³⁶ The '1910' episode is not the only portion of *The Years* manuscript to contain links with *Three Guineas*, however, and the central sections of this chapter will extend Briggs's contention by charting how Woolf's cultural criticism developed through her writing of the 1931 speech, her collection of the scrapbooks, her drafting of *The Pargiters* and her composition of *Three Guineas* through close analysis of the diverse holograph and typescript materials relating to these texts. Tracing the genesis of these works prompts a reassessment of the evolution of *Three Guineas* and the manner in which it is perceived to be 'one book' with *The Years*, as Woolf herself retrospectively declared it to be.³⁷

³³ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁴ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, 317; see Virginia Woolf, *The Pargiters* MS, M.42, 8 Vols., in *VW: MA*, 4: 24.

³⁵ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, 372.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.

³⁷ *D* 5: 148.

Using Genetic Criticism to Trace the Evolution of *Three Guineas*

This chapter differs significantly from Chapters 1, 2 and 4 of this thesis through its emphasis on close manuscript study. Here I return to genetic criticism's origins as a branch of textual criticism designed to examine the pre-publication texts associated with a literary work's production and to trace that work's evolution into the public sphere. Throughout this chapter, however, as throughout this thesis, I tailor my genetic approach to accord with a feminist-historicist interpretation of Woolf, adapting the practices of genetic criticism as necessary to suit the demands of this project. To explain why and how I use genetic criticism to explore the genesis of *Three Guineas* in this chapter, and to reinforce my claim that genetic criticism is relevant to Woolf studies, the following section reviews the history of this relatively recent school of textual and editing theory, setting out the specific analytical and editorial methods adopted here and the principles that direct them.

Up until the 1980s (when Jerome J. McGann and D. F. McKenzie 'upset the scholarly apple cart' by 'suggest[ing] the importance of the social condition of texts'³⁸), textual criticism focussed on authorial intention, following the influential writings of W. W. Greg, Fredson Bowers and G. Thomas Tanselle.³⁹ Scholarly editors working in this dominant tradition turned to the drafts of published texts to discover and restore the intended, 'original' work of the author. Genetic criticism developed in France in the 1970s in opposition to this Anglo-American strand of textual and editing theory.⁴⁰

³⁸ Peter L. Shillingsburg, *From Gutenberg to Google: Electronic Representations of Literary Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8. The works Shillingsburg credits here with having overhauled the authorial orientation of Anglo-American 'copy-text' editing include Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) and D. F. McKenzie, *The Sociology of Bibliography* (London: British Library, 1986).

³⁹ See W. W. Greg, 'The Rationale of Copy-Text,' *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950-1951): 19-36; Fredson Bowers, *Essays in Bibliography, Text and Editing* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975); and G. Thomas Tanselle, 'The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention,' *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976): 167-211. Michael Groden insightfully surveys the relationships and differences between these three key critics in 'Contemporary Textual and Literary Theory,' in *Representing Modernist Texts*, 259-286.

⁴⁰ Daniel Ferrer and Michael Groden argue that contemporary Anglo-American textual criticism continues to be incompatible with genetic criticism, highlighting textual criticism's 'overarching goal of establishing a single conflated text [which] tends to subsume all variation into an accuracy-versus-error dichotomy' in their introduction to *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes*, ed. Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 10. However, this view of contemporary Anglo-American textual criticism obscures the work of textual critics following the rise of cultural studies and the sociological turn in editorial theory, who frequently recognise multiple authorised versions of texts as equally and variously valuable. See, for example, George Bornstein's contention in *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Reflecting back in 1982, Jean Bellemin-Noël recalled how he ‘coin[ed] the term “avant-texte” as a substitute’ for ‘rough-draft(s)’ (*brouillon(s)*) in the early 1970s because ‘rough-draft’ seemed to him to suggest something tangled (*embrouillé*), which ‘therefore implied that authors have a presentiment of a perfect state that they are reaching for.’⁴¹ ‘It is too idealistic to assume that somewhere a perfect Text already exists that writers must find like treasure,’ Bellemin-Noël asserted, challenging the common assumption that manuscript drafts represent the authorial origins of a published text by asserting that manuscripts are ‘not mothers,’ but ‘texts *as* children.’⁴² Drawing on his psychoanalytical approach to literary criticism, Bellemin-Noël envisioned works and drafts in relation to each other rather than in relation to their author. He argued that *avant-textes*, or ‘pre-texts,’ represent the same ‘autonomous beings’ that later emerge in the public arena in print and also ‘an infinity of other selves’ that may be entirely unrecognisable to the mature works.⁴³

The language Woolf uses to discuss the evolution of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* interestingly foreshadows Bellemin-Noël’s Freudian model of manuscript study. While he figures the publication of a text as its entry into adulthood, Woolf describes the release of *Three Guineas* as a ‘childbirth.’⁴⁴ Her use of this metaphor relates partly to an increased awareness of her own childlessness while writing *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, during which time she was experiencing the menopause, or ‘T[ime] of L[ife],’ as she referred to it in her diary.⁴⁵ In drawing this parallel Woolf also goes further than Bellemin-Noël in emphasising the vulnerability, instability and potential changeability of texts at the manuscript stage; by figuring her early versions as developing embryos/foetuses she denies them any fixed independent existence until the moment of publication. Woolf was always uneasy about setting her works into any

2001) that ‘[w]e need to know what alternate versions to a text we are studying do or might exist, but we do not need ... to choose just one version for exclusive attention. On the contrary, we might ... elect to consider multiple versions’ (5).

⁴¹ Jean Bellemin-Noël, ‘Psychoanalytic Reading and the Avant-texte,’ in *Genetic Criticism*, 30; originally published in French as ‘Avant-texte et lecture psychoanalytique’ (1982). Judith Robinson-Valéry provides a more contemporary discussion of the ‘negative undertones of the two key words *brouillon* and *draft*’ and the ‘linguistically-induced prejudices’ that these terms have and may still produce in the reader within ‘The “Rough” and the “Polished”,’ *Yale French Studies* 89 (1996): 60.

⁴² Bellemin-Noël, ‘Psychoanalytic Reading and the Avant-texte,’ 30-31 (emphasis in original).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁴⁴ On 5 June 1938 Woolf referred to the release of *Three Guineas* as ‘the mildest childbirth I have ever had,’ adding; ‘Compare it with *The Years*!’ (*D* 5: 148).

⁴⁵ *D* 5: 35, 63, 64.

permanent form and revised them perpetually even after publication for subsequent editions.⁴⁶ This dogma of indeterminacy in her writing practice makes Woolf's manuscripts particularly open to a study employing the methods of genetic criticism, a discipline which, as Judith Robinson-Valéry notes, demonstrates 'that at the "rough draft" stage a literary or artistic work ... is freer to move, to reshape its own substance and take positive pleasure in experimenting with its own numerous forms of plasticity, that is, its capacity to create an almost unlimited number of potential structures.'⁴⁷

One of the hazards of manuscript study, however, as Bellemin-Noël reminds us, is that 'what was written *before* and had, at first, no *after*, we meet only *after*, and this tempts us to *supply* a before in the sense of a priority, cause, or origin.'⁴⁸ Just as she was wary of rearranging the lives of her biographical subjects 'in all sorts of patterns of which they were ignorant,' we must be wary of moulding Woolf's manuscripts into arrangements of which both she and they were unaware.⁴⁹ Yet, as Brenda Silver notes in her discussion of the effect of textual criticism on contemporary perceptions of Woolf's politics and art, 'Once we are aware of the manuscript versions and their alternate readings, it becomes impossible, except by a willed act of commitment ... not to be conscious of their presence within the "final" text.'⁵⁰ The closeness of these discussions of the dangers of retrospective reading from Bellemin-Noël and Silver should alert us to similarities between the theoretical framework of genetic criticism and the current practices of Woolf criticism. Feminist critics of Woolf have been reading and analysing surviving pre-publication texts alongside her published works for decades as Silver notes in her account of 'Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice.' The methodology of genetic criticism sits comfortably with a feminist-historicist approach to Woolf's writings, offering an extended apparatus with which to question the relationship between her works of the 1930s. This thesis tackles the problem of hindsight by attempting, through a willed act of commitment like that proposed by Silver, to read Woolf's writings forward rather than backward. My study of the fluctuating development of Woolf's cultural criticism through these texts notes the

⁴⁶ On Woolf's revisions between published editions see Julia Briggs, 'Between the Texts: Virginia Woolf's Acts of Revision,' in *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 208-230.

⁴⁷ Robinson-Valéry, 'The "Rough" and the "Polished",' 61.

⁴⁸ Bellemin-Noël, 'Psychoanalytic Reading and the Avant-texte,' 31 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁹ Virginia Woolf, "'I am Christina Rossetti'," in *E* 5, 554.

⁵⁰ Silver, 'Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice,' 194.

marks of earlier deleted or suspended social analysis within *The Years* while endeavouring to avoid superimposing the radical political arguments of the printed text of *Three Guineas* onto *The Years*, or indeed, onto the other unpublished pre-texts through which this work evolved.

A second potential hazard of close manuscript study is the temptation to view writings in isolation from their social, political and literary contexts. Numerous external socio-political and economic factors influenced the evolution of *Three Guineas* and shaped Woolf's intentions for this text. Her turn towards cultural criticism in the 1930s reflected the troubled economic and political climate of the decade and a corresponding trend towards social commentary in much of the period's literature, but it also reflected her personal desire for a new literary and intellectual direction and her constant drive for experimentation. Unlike traditional manuscript study, Louis Hay asserts, '[g]enetic analysis ... encourages us to question ... the opposition between text and context, between the study of writings and of cultures.'⁵¹ Genetic critics view the multiple texts through which a work is constructed – manuscript, typescript, proof or published work – as both transitory materializations of a wider, fluid writing process and contained, stable artefacts, marked by the historical and sociological origins that influenced their conception. This socio-historicist aspect of genetic analysis reinforces the necessity of reading in Woolf's working notes and drafts for *The Years* and *Three Guineas* the influence of the critical thinking of her immediate circle, trends in contemporary writing, and the political climate of the time. The two major works that grew out of Woolf's envisaged investigation into the oppression of women in the 1930s disclose not only the influence of contemporary events but also the culmination of a lifetime of thinking and writing as a cultural and feminist critic. As the discussion of earlier chapters indicates, Woolf's work in this decade does not represent an entirely new direction for her oeuvre but rather a continuation of her previous writing.

Dirk van Hulle argues in his genetic study of Joyce, Proust and Mann that genetic criticism is relevant to literary modernism for the 'pragmatic' reason that 'so many manuscripts of modernist texts have been preserved.'⁵² The tangled textual

⁵¹ Louis Hay, 'Genetic Criticism: Origins and Perspectives,' in *Genetic Criticism*, 23; originally published in French as 'La Critique génétique: Origines et perspectives' (1979).

⁵² Dirk van Hulle, *Textual Awareness: A Genetic Study of Late Manuscripts by Joyce, Proust, and Mann* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 9.

histories of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* ideally lend themselves to the methodology of genetic criticism. Inspired by a speech, conceived as one work and evidenced by a large quantity of manuscript and typescript material, any discussion of the writing process that produced *The Years* and *Three Guineas* involves engagement with a wide variety of pre-publication material. The 1931 talk that prompted the evolution of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* survives in four versions: a nine-page holograph draft and a twenty-five typescript draft, both dating from the era of the speech's delivery; the first essay of *The Pargiters*, dated 11 October 1932; and a heavily revised and abridged essay version posthumously published by Leonard Woolf as 'Professions for Women.'⁵³ Following her address to the L&NSWS and the diary reference to writing a sequel to *A Room of One's Own* in January 1931, Woolf began to keep scrapbooks of quotations and newspaper cuttings relating to the restrictions placed on women's private, emotional, professional, and public lives. She continued this practice until late 1937, leaving three scrapbooks in all. Woolf's major project of cultural criticism dominated this seven-year period as she became preoccupied with dissecting the consequences of British patriarchal society; 'Every book, every newspaper article that she read during these years became part of her larger vision.'⁵⁴ In 1932 Woolf began a notebook with the story of *The Pargiters*, alternating the chapters with socio-feminist essays. This 'novel-essay' format was soon dropped, but she continued to draft her story of the Pargiter family, which ran to eight notebooks when completed in 1934.⁵⁵ These eight volumes are considered the first holograph version of *The Years*, which was subsequently rewritten during 1935-1936 and finally published in 1937. A separate

⁵³ Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women' holograph, in M.1.4, in VW: MA, 117-133; Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women' typescript, M.70, in VW: MA; TP, 5-10; Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women,' in CE 4, 284-289. There is some debate concerning which version best represents the paper that Woolf presented to the Junior Council of the L&NSWS on 21 January 1931. Jeri Johnson suggests that the typescript 'appears to be the actual text of the speech Woolf delivered' (see Johnson, introduction to *The Years*, ed. Jeri Johnson (London: Penguin, 1988), xxxiv); while Naomi Black believes this typescript may have been produced 'soon after the speech was given' (see Black, introduction to *Three Guineas* (2001), xxi). Black suggests that references to Ethel Smyth in this paper, the speaker who preceded Woolf at the L&NSWS meeting, indicate that the typescript could not have been produced before that night. Yet these allusions supply no specific information about Smyth's address but rather convey a general knowledge of her professional life, which, as a close friend of Smyth, Woolf might easily have written prior to the event. In addition, whether it was produced before or immediately after Woolf's talk the typescript nonetheless supplies the fullest, contemporaneous account of Woolf's speech. Therefore it is to this typescript that I turn in this thesis to cite this elusive, oral pre-text. A transcription of the typescript is also available in TP, xxvii-xliv.

⁵⁴ Silver, 'The Authority of Anger: *Three Guineas* as Case Study,' 345.

⁵⁵ References to the first volume and a half of this holograph in this chapter will be to Leaska's TP, except where my reading of the manuscript differs from Leaska in which case I refer to the manuscript directly.

manuscript fragment, three typescript fragments and incomplete sets of first and second galley proofs of *The Years* also survive. No full draft, but numerous fragmentary pre-texts relating to *Three Guineas* are still in existence, as well as an abridged version of the work titled 'Women Must Weep – Or Unite Against War,' published in *Atlantic Monthly* in two parts, in May and June 1938.⁵⁶ Part of the difficulty of working with the diverse draft materials relating to *The Years* and *Three Guineas* is the problem of determining the relationships between the different documents. The three scrapbooks of cuttings Woolf collected concurrently with her writing of *The Years*, for example, are generally considered to relate to *Three Guineas* although there is much within them that relates to the novel. Studying the evolution of *Three Guineas* from *The Years* requires engagement with numerous fragmentary and often undated documents, several of which contain material relating to both works. Applying the editorial practices of genetic criticism to the draft material of both these works provides a method for recognising and analysing the complex links between them.

In 1985 the French geneticist Pierre-Marc de Biasi attempted to rationalise genetic criticism by breaking manuscript study down into five 'essential phases' through which genetic critics should organise and transcribe collections of manuscripts in order to produce genetic editions of literary works.⁵⁷ Biasi's desire to produce a standardised methodology for editing a genetic text has proved unrealistic, not least because there can be no standard collection of manuscripts. The pre-texts of every writer and every work exist in entirely different forms and therefore require different treatment. Biasi's step-by-step method of manuscript study will nevertheless be adopted in this study as it provides a useful starting-point for organising and interpreting the diverse body of texts connected with *Three Guineas*. His final objective, the establishment and publication of a pre-text, is evidently not an aim of this thesis. In fact, the production of a genetic edition is rarely commercially viable and many contemporary genetic critics view the 'presentation in print' of manuscript documents as 'only part of [genetic criticism's] broader goal of reconstructing and analyzing a

⁵⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'Women Must Weep,' 2 Parts, *Atlantic Monthly* 161: 5 (1938): 585-594; and 161: 2 (1938): 750-759 (subtitle added to second instalment: '—Or Unite Against War').

⁵⁷ Pierre-Marc de Biasi, 'Toward a Science of Literature: Manuscript Analysis and the Genesis of the Work,' in *Genetic Criticism*, 44; originally published in French as 'Vers une science de la littérature: L'Analyse des manuscrits et la genèse de l'œuvre' (1985; 1989).

chain of writing events.’⁵⁸ Yet Biasi’s argument that while geneticists are ‘well placed to be the first critical users of the material they analyze’ they also have a scholarly responsibility to ‘mak[e] the results of their analysis available to many critical readings’ is compelling.⁵⁹ With this objective in mind, a transcription of the currently unpublished after-dinner scene of the ‘1910’ chapter of *The Years* manuscript is included in Appendix B. This transcription might be viewed as a supplement to the two short typescript drafts of the after-dinner section of ‘1910’ previously published in an article by Susan M. Squier.⁶⁰ The last section of this chapter demonstrates that together these manuscript and typescript segments valuably evidence the evolution of Woolf’s 1930s feminist-pacifist stance. Just as the final objective of Biasi’s guidelines for manuscript study has been altered to match the scope of this thesis, I adapt the first four stages of his directive to suit the shape of this project and the texts involved.

The first stage of Biasi’s directive involves gathering and authenticating all available manuscripts of the work in question; a phase Biasi designates as ‘Constituting the dossier.’⁶¹ Despite the vast array of documentary material involved, the gathering and authenticating of pre-texts for this project fortunately presents few problems due to the large amount of existing critical research into Woolf’s works. My discussion of the dossier is limited in this chapter to the textual versions most relevant to identifying the teleological process by which Woolf’s novel and polemic evolved in the 1930s and to examining the evolution of her feminist-pacifist critique through this project.⁶² An annotated list of the texts gathered in my writing of this chapter is appended, including catalogue numbers as ascribed to them in the Monks House Papers archive at the

⁵⁸ Ferrer and Groden, introduction to *Genetic Criticism*, 11.

⁵⁹ Biasi, ‘Toward a Science of Literature,’ 61.

⁶⁰ Susan M. Squier, ‘A Track of Our Own: Typescript Drafts of *The Years*,’ in *Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, 198-211. Squier’s article focuses on how ‘[t]hese previously unpublished typescript drafts complete our picture of Virginia Woolf’s movement from the “essay-novel” experiment ... to the novel of political criticism entitled *The Years*’ (202). My chapter reads these typescripts with *The Pargiters* and *The Years* as pre-texts to evidence Woolf’s movement to *Three Guineas*.

⁶¹ Biasi, ‘Toward a Science of Literature,’ 45.

⁶² With this aim in mind, I focus on pre-publication material and exclude from my dossier the first American editions of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* and all subsequent British and American editions. For a list of substantive textual variants between the first British and first American editions of *The Years*, see the Hogarth Press Definitive Edition (1990), reprinted by Vintage; Virginia Woolf, *The Years* (London: Vintage, 1992), 381-383. For substantive textual variants between the first British and first American editions of *Three Guineas* see appendices B and C of Black’s edition of *Three Guineas* (2001).

University of Sussex Library and the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature at the New York Public Library.⁶³

The second of Biasi's directives, 'Specifying and classifying each folio of the dossier,' has similarly been simplified by the previous cataloguing of the folios by these institutions.⁶⁴ Admittedly, there are significant problems with these catalogue numbers from the perspective of a genetic study. They give no indication of the order of composition and are disorientating when isolated from the two distinct Woolf collections. The 'confusing nomenclature ("fragments" and "notes") used to describe these materials' within the library catalogues also, Wisor argues, 'in many instances obscures the nature of the documents themselves.'⁶⁵ A genetic editor of *Three Guineas* would need to re-evaluate and reorganise these materials, perhaps renaming them, but to reclassify each document for the purpose of this study would evidently only create confusion since the existing catalogue numbers are so widely-used in Woolf scholarship.

The third and fourth stages of Biasi's guide to genetic criticism provide his most useful advice on how to manage the difficult task of ordering and transcribing the surviving manuscript and typescript fragments of *The Years* and *Three Guineas*. Much of the pre-publication material relating to these texts is undated and so arranging these texts into the order of composition presents something of a challenge. Likewise, Woolf's energetic writing, correcting and rewriting of many portions of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* leads to difficulties deciphering her manuscript pages. Biasi suggests that by linking the third and fourth steps of genetic study together, 'Organizing ... the dossier of rough drafts and other draft documents' into 'teleological order' and 'Deciphering and transcribing the whole dossier,' it is possible to gradually perform each task in response to the other.⁶⁶ He contends that deciphering must 'accompan[y] each stage of research, from the first contact with a new manuscript dossier to the last

⁶³ The only major pre-publication document related directly to *The Years* or *Three Guineas* that I believe to be missing from my dossier is the little-known set of second galley proofs for *The Years* at Smith College, Northampton Massachusetts, which it has not been possible for me to access. James M. Haule made reference to these two bound proofs in 'A Modest Metaphysics of Textual Editing,' a paper read at the *Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, University of Denver, 20 June 2008. Haule's current project focuses on tracing the differences between the proofs and the first published edition of *The Years*.

⁶⁴ Biasi, 'Toward a Science of Literature,' 44.

⁶⁵ Wisor, 'Versioning Virginia Woolf,' 513.

⁶⁶ Biasi, 'Toward a Science of Literature,' 44.

corrections of detail in the edition and the critical study.’⁶⁷ ‘Deciphering provides the hypotheses that are indispensable for restoring ... an order in the writing process,’ Biasi suggests, while ‘the provisional classification that results from [ordering the manuscripts] ... allows most of the apparently insoluble problems of deciphering to be solved.’⁶⁸ Rather than two separate stages, the processes of classification and deciphering ‘complement each other’ and make it possible to ‘reduce the illegibilities to a negligible proportion.’⁶⁹ Through identifying, classifying, numbering and organising the manuscripts, the genetic editor or critic is increasingly required to engage with the content of the manuscripts which serves as preparation for the final stages of reading and transcription. Following Biasi’s method cannot conclusively establish an order of composition for Woolf’s texts or reduce all instances of the illegible to the legible, but moving back and forth between the correspondent portions of the different variants does increase the possibility of understanding Woolf’s meaning in those manuscripts where her script is less readable, even if it is unlikely that a conclusive order could ever be ascribed to their composition.

In the case of tracing Woolf’s texts, the processes Biasi prescribes are both enriched and complicated by reading beyond the dossier to take in her diary, letters and other writings, particularly essays, produced during the period of composition. Correlating this array of information supports our understanding of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* as one work, but it also destabilises our perception of the two texts as conjoined in isolation from Woolf’s other works. As the last two chapters have demonstrated, these works are not only closely connected to each other but also to works written by Woolf in the 1920s, and to ideas that had been developing in her mind for decades. Could *A Room of One’s Own*, the work to which Woolf declared her polemic to be a sequel, also be a pre-text to *Three Guineas*? Here, it is important to carefully outline and respect the meanings of the terms ‘work,’ ‘text’ and ‘document’ as usually employed by textual critics. If ‘work’ implies a literary endeavour evidenced by one or more textual records, ‘text,’ the written representation of a version of a work, and ‘document’ the material artefact in which a text is recorded, then although the two are closely associated, *A Room of One’s Own* cannot be described as a textual variant of

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Three Guineas. The published text of *A Room of One's Own* is a separate work that represents the culmination of a much earlier, distinct writing project; it has its roots in a different speech, was composed with different aims, and is evidenced by its own collection of existent textual versions and documents. Figuring *The Years* and *Three Guineas* as one work then, in the terminology of textual criticism, may also be impossible. To do so would be to suggest that the novel and the polemic are two interdependent textual versions of the same literary effort when they might more helpfully be viewed in the context of Woolf's feminism, earlier pacifism and recent interest in public politics as two separate works both influenced by her life-long role as a cultural critic. The theory and methods of genetic criticism are essential to my negotiation of such nuances while analysing the shared evolution of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* in this chapter.

Planning and Writing and Changing Direction, 1931-1937

On 20 January 1931, a day before giving her speech to the Junior Council of the L&NSWS, Woolf famously declared:

I have this moment, while having my bath, conceived an entire new book—a sequel to a Room of Ones [sic] Own—about the sexual life of women: to be called Professions for Women perhaps—Lord how exciting! This sprang out of my paper to be read on Wednesday morning to Pippa's society.⁷⁰

The 'sequel to a Room of Ones Own' as described here never appeared; Woolf never published an explicit discussion of 'the sexual life of women.' Yet despite the abortion of *The Pargiters*, or rather through it, this moment of conception produced two different 'childbirths,' as she would later refer to the publication of *The Years* and *Three Guineas*. An additional note scribbled alongside this diary entry by Woolf in May 1934 – 'This is Here & Now I think' – links the evolution of these texts to this conception of 'an entire new book.'⁷¹ 'Here & Now' was not a working title for *Three Guineas*, however, but for *The Years*, adopted after the abandonment of *The Pargiters* but prior to the visualisation of *Three Guineas*. Not until late 1934 did Woolf imagine writing a separate factual pamphlet to accompany her novel, which she first mentions in her

⁷⁰ D 4: 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

annual New Year survey of current and future projects in her diary on 1 January 1935.⁷² From our retrospective viewpoint all three works appear to have grown from ideas sparked by the 1931 speech, but we should remember Bellemin-Noël's warning that 'what was written *before* ... had, at first, no *after*' and be wary of 'supply[ing] a *before* in the sense of a priority, cause or origin' to that which we only ever encounter with hindsight.⁷³ The words 'I think' indicate that Woolf herself was uncertain what was, or would be, the 'sequel to a Room of Ones Own' in May 1934, although she felt it might be the novel on which she was working.⁷⁴ Her uncertainty reflects the fact that 'Here & Now' was currently in an unfixed and unfinished state. Far from stabilising our perception of the genetic relationship between these texts then, this marginal note should alert the reader to the haphazard and changeable process through which *The Years* and *Three Guineas* developed from the wreckage of *The Pargiters*, and highlight the need for further examination of the circuitous and unsystematic evolution of these two works which Woolf would later declare to be one book.

When Woolf began drafting her 'sequel to a Room of Ones Own' on 11 October 1932, the 'Professions for Women' speech served as both pre-text and pretext for *The Pargiters*, which began with the subtitle: '<A Novel> {An} Essay based upon a paper read to the London & National Society for Women's Service.'⁷⁵ The premise that the essay sections of *The Pargiters* were written from the remnants of a speech to this society allowed Woolf to address her readers as if she were speaking with a female, working audience, just as her opening footnote to *A Room of One's Own* had allowed her to write her history of women and literature as if she were still addressing the young, female undergraduate students who attended her 'papers [...] to the Arts Society at Newnham and the Odtas at Girton.'⁷⁶ In fact, relatively little of the speech given on 21 January 1931 was directly incorporated into the essay sections of *The Pargiters*. The surviving twenty-five page typescript of the speech and the first *Pargiters* essay begin with almost identical references to the invitation to speak, but the shared wording is employed for a different purpose in each text. In the speech, Woolf tells her audience

⁷² D 4: 271.

⁷³ Bellemin-Noël, 'Psychoanalytic Reading and the Avant-texte,' 31 (emphasis in original).

⁷⁴ D 4: 6.

⁷⁵ Woolf, *The Pargiters* MS, M.42, 1: 5. For an explanation of my transcription symbols and procedures in this chapter see Appendix B, 264.

⁷⁶ AROO, 3.

that ‘your Secretary invited me to come here’ in order ‘that I might perhaps tell you something about my own professional experiences’ to establish her subject as the challenges she faced as a budding female critic and her need to kill ‘the Angel in the house,’ Coventry Patmore’s pervasive nineteenth-century ideal of femininity, before she could confidently and freely express her opinions.⁷⁷ In *The Pargiters*, the invitation is cited less to establish Woolf’s subject than her right to speak on it. Leila Brosnan has observed that Woolf constructed ‘the essay as letter when it was her own right to articulacy that was in question.’⁷⁸ Here, we see the forerunner of Woolf’s use of the epistolary form in *Three Guineas* as she uses ‘the essay as lecture’ to assert her right to speak in *The Pargiters*.

After setting up her position as a lecturer to her readers, and reassuring us that she is only ‘trying to speak the truth,’ the subject of the first *Pargiters* essay moves quickly from Woolf’s own professional experiences to a discussion of ‘professions in general’ and a justification of her claim that ‘in trying to earn [their] living professionally, [women] are doing work of enormous importance.’⁷⁹ Many of the dominant themes in *The Pargiters* essay can be found in the typescript of the earlier speech; for example, the ‘tremendous tradition of mastery man has behind him,’ women’s exclusion from this tradition, and the ‘convention [that] allows men to be much more open in what they say than women.’⁸⁰ However, any direct correspondence in language and structure between the two texts dissolves after the first five paragraphs of the first *Pargiters* essay. In the later text, Woolf soon introduces her ‘novel of fact [...] based upon some scores—I might boldly say thousands—of old memoirs,’ from which she will quote to enable her readers/listeners to ‘forget that we are in this room, this night’ and ‘become the people that we were two or three generations ago.’⁸¹ Rather than using the figurative ‘Angel in the house’ to represent the Victorian ‘ideal of womanhood,’ or asking her readers to ‘put [themselves] into the shoes of a man’ and

⁷⁷ Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’ typescript, M.70, 1, 4. For the popular nineteenth-century poem in response to which Woolf’s ‘Angel’ is derived see Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House* (1891), in *The Victorian Web* [Web site and database], ed. George P. Landow (Brown University, 2003); available from <<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/patmore/angel/index.html>>; accessed 2 March 2010.

⁷⁸ Leila Brosnan, *Reading Virginia Woolf’s Essays and Journalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 127.

⁷⁹ *TP*, 5-8.

⁸⁰ Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’ typescript, M.70, 23, 17.

⁸¹ *TP*, 8.

imagine their ‘very difficult position,’ in *The Pargiters* Woolf uses fictional episodes to illustrate the differing roles of men and women in the middle-class Victorian household, and to highlight how the legacy of this domestic patriarchy continues to shape and constrain men’s and women’s public and private lives in the twentieth century.⁸²

The five fictional chapters of *The Pargiters* correspond to the ‘1880’ section of *The Years*. The first scene shows the Pargiter siblings and their father, Colonel Abel Pargiter, at tea in fifty-six Abercorn Terrace while their invalid mother lies dying upstairs. The second scene includes ten-year-old Rose’s trip to Lamleys and her fear at meeting a man by the pillar box, who ‘gibbered some nonsense at her [...] & began to undo his clothes...’⁸³ In the third chapter, we meet Edward Pargiter in his rooms at Oxford, juggling the affections of his two friends, Gibbs and Jevons (‘Ashley’ in *The Years*), while fantasising about his cousin Kitty Malone. The last two scenes focus on Kitty, the daughter of an Oxford master. In the fourth we see her life at St Katherine’s Lodge; entertaining distinguished professors and their wives, pouring tea for undergraduates, learning history, and dreaming of Yorkshire. The final scene depicts Kitty’s visit to the home of Nelly Brook (later, ‘Robson’), a fellow pupil of Lucy Craddock, whose working-class parents are Yorkshire-born. These fictional scenes serve as illustrations to her argument in the essay sections that women’s access to the professions is fundamental if they are to gain the financial and intellectual independence they have so long lacked. They draw on her life-long reading of biographies and memoirs and reflect her growing conviction, expressed in her first *Pargiters* essay, that ‘we cannot understand the present if we isolate it from the past.’⁸⁴

Woolf endows her fictional chapters with a sense of history by presenting these five scenes as only ‘short extracts’ from a much larger, unpublished novel ‘that will run into many volumes.’⁸⁵ She gives her first fictional episode an imaginary chapter number, ‘CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX,’ playfully introduces its characters by referring to their fictional ancestors, and gives their dates, titles and professions as if she were writing a biography rather than a novel:

⁸² Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’ typescript, M.70, 5, 20-21.

⁸³ *TP*, 43.

⁸⁴ *TP*, 8.

⁸⁵ *TP*, 9.

The Chapter that I am about to read is taken from volume five and describes a scene in the life of the Abel Pargiters – Captain Abel Pargiter, R.N. (1826-1890), the father, being the third in descent from John Pargiter (1730-1785), the Yorkshire cotton spinner and banker, with whom the book begins.⁸⁶

Despite Woolf's apparent division between fact and fiction in *The Pargiters*, the two modes entwine in the essay sections of the text as elements of the imagined novel are revealed here that do not appear in the fictional episodes. Only in the third essay, for example, do we learn of Bobby's uncomplicated childish love for Eleanor's friend Miriam Parish; or are we told that the day after Rose's encounter with 'the man under the lamp' she 'began to observe Bobby more closely' and 'hunt about [...] in her father's study for some of his old books about the treatment of Tropical Diseases, because they had certain pictures.'⁸⁷ Both of these details help Woolf continue her argument that Victorian women grew up to feel disturbed and threatened by 'street love' because they were kept in ignorance about their bodies, men's bodies and sex, while Victorian males were encouraged to embrace rather than fear their sexual curiosity. The appearance of these details in an essay section serves to continue the fiction that Woolf has five volumes of a grand, nineteenth-century style realist novel to refer to whenever she wishes to add more information about her characters. Paradoxically, of course, these references to a fictitious and cumbersome 'novel of fact' led Woolf to undertake just such a project. Woolf wrote over 180 pages of *The Pargiters* between 11 October and 19 December 1932, but soon after the 'novel-essay' was recast as a fictional work that would later become *The Years*, her longest and superficially her most conventionally realist novel since *Night and Day*.

Early in 1933 while working to complete *Flush* Woolf found her mind constantly returning to *The Pargiters* despite her anxiety to finish her biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dog. 'About a week ago,' she noted in her diary on 15 January, 'I began the making up of scenes—unconsciously [...] & so, for a week, I've sat here, staring at the typewriter, & speaking aloud phrases of The Pargiters.'⁸⁸ On 19 January she 'confessed that The Pargiters are like cuckoos in my nest—which should be *Flush*. I have only 50 pages to correct [...] & these cursed scenes & dialogues will go

⁸⁶ *TP*, 9-10.

⁸⁷ *TP*, 51-53.

⁸⁸ *D* 4: 143.

on springing up in my head.’⁸⁹ Woolf longed to continue the fictional side of her ‘novel-essay,’ which by 22 January, she began to fear was too ‘didactic.’⁹⁰ Questioning ‘the value’ of the draft she had written a month earlier, Woolf wondered if ‘perhaps it was only that spurious passion that made me rattle away before Christmas.’⁹¹ Still burdened with revisions to *Flush*, she consoled herself with the prospect that she might soon return to *The Pargiters* and to story-telling: ‘oh to be free, in fiction, making up my scenes again—however discreetly.’⁹² Each of these quotations discloses Woolf’s desire for story-telling and her anxiety about writing polemical cultural criticism. Woolf no longer refers to the critical sections of *The Pargiters* as ‘essays,’ but describes them only in relation to their position between the fictional episodes as ‘interchapters.’⁹³ The innovative formal shape Woolf imagined for *The Pargiters* at this stage suggests the fractured narrative structures of postmodern fiction.⁹⁴ This framework proved too challenging to manage and was soon dropped, however; she recorded ‘leaving out the interchapters’ ten days later as she worked on ‘revising the first chapter.’⁹⁵ Overt social commentary no longer seemed appropriate or necessary to Woolf’s vision of this text, which she now hoped to write as a novel with her critical arguments ‘compact[ed] [...] in the text’ and supported by ‘an appendix of dates.’⁹⁶

At this stage, Woolf had no thought of producing a separate critical work. There is an assumption in Woolf criticism that when *The Pargiters* was abandoned, the essay and fictional sections of that text were simply divided as Woolf developed the latter into *The Years* and set the former aside to be written as *Three Guineas*. Immediately after dropping the ‘interchapters’ and throughout 1933, however, the structure and genre of Woolf’s new work remained in a state of flux. On 25 April 1933 Woolf hoped *The Pargiters* would ‘be a terrific affair [...] bold & adventurous [...] includ[ing] satire, comedy, poetry, narrative [...] millions of ideas but no preaching—history, politics, feminism, art, literature—in short a summing up of all I know, feel, laugh at, despise,

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *D* 4: 145.

⁹¹ *D* 4: 144-145.

⁹² *D* 4: 145.

⁹³ *D* 4: 146.

⁹⁴ Pamela L. Caughie surveys *The Pargiters* and its ‘novel-essay’ structure through the lens of postmodernism in *Virginia Woolf & Postmodernism: Literature in Quest & Question of Itself* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 94-104.

⁹⁵ *D* 4: 146.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

like, admire hate & so on,' but wondered 'what form is to hold [it] all together?'⁹⁷ Having 'assembled 50,000 words of "real" life' during the past few months, she felt that 'in the next 50 I must somehow comment [...] while keeping the march of events.'⁹⁸ She was concerned not to lose sight of her plot.

Discussions about the development of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* often revolve around the tension between fact and fiction in these works, but it might be more appropriate to focus on the relationship between argument and illustration. There is little conflict between fact and fiction in Woolf's visualisation of *The Pargiters*. Her description of 50,000 words of fictional narrative as "'real" life' indicates her belief that stories can be factual, even if their characters are invented and their plots imagined.⁹⁹ The word 'truth' in Woolf's declaration, 'I prefer, where truth is important, to write fiction,' reveals that this reconciliation is possible because Woolf's first concern is not objective 'fact,' the accurate record of actual people, places, events, dates or statistical information, but subjective 'truth,' that is, the faithful representation of human experiences and emotions.¹⁰⁰ Woolf did also become markedly more attentive to objective facts in the 1930s, however, as evidenced by her collection of newspaper cuttings to support her writing of *The Pargiters*. Earlier in her career Woolf had viewed concern with factual details as the downfall of the popular Edwardian novelists and the limitation of Jane Austen, who she ridiculed in a 1913 essay for 'eliminat[ing] her hedge' when 'she found out that hedges do not grow in Northamptonshire [...] rather than run the risk of inventing one which could not exist.'¹⁰¹ In the 1930s, in contrast, Woolf desired the authority of factual accuracy to carry the weight of her cultural criticism and so wished to produce a novel of which it could be said; 'there is not a statement in it that cannot be verified.'¹⁰² As Woolf began writing *The Pargiters* she applied to friends for factual information to support her new work. In November 1932 she asked Margaret Llewelyn Davies if she might once more see 'a letter from W. Bagehot' to her aunt, Emily Davies, 'about women being servants' so that she could

⁹⁷ D 4: 151-152.

⁹⁸ D 4: 152.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ TP, 9.

¹⁰¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Jane Austen,' in E 2, 12.

¹⁰² TP, 9.

quote from it.¹⁰³ In December she wrote to Ethel Smyth to ask ‘about Mrs Pankhurst and the suffrage,’ explaining that she was ‘turning over that other little book in [her] mind’ and wanted ‘to know a few facts.’¹⁰⁴ The use and presence of external facts within Woolf’s fictional chapters of *The Pargiters* lead them to be as representative of her cultural criticism as the essays she abandoned. Rather than dropping her exploration of ‘the sexual, economic and social forces affecting the lives of those characters ... she would dramatise in the fictional sections,’ Woolf’s decision to drop the essay sections was motivated by a desire to work this exploration into her story-telling.¹⁰⁵ The difficulty was to explicitly argue as well as illustrate her critical viewpoint without ‘becoming static.’¹⁰⁶

The character of Elvira Pargiter, later to become Sara in *The Years*, was crucial in Woolf’s mind to achieving this feat at this stage of the project. As she worked on what were to be the ‘1891’ and ‘1907’ chapters of *The Years*, Woolf began to envision Elvira as a mouthpiece for her pacifist-feminist comment in the novel. Even before she had begun drafting the adult Elvira, Woolf was so engaged in imagining her thoughts and opinions that the voice of Elvira emerged as she contemplated events in her own life. In late March 1933 Woolf was offered an honorary doctorate from Manchester University which she determined to reject on the grounds that accepting it would involve participating in and benefiting from the exclusive, patriarchal education system she reviled. ‘It is an utterly corrupt society [...] & I will take nothing that it can give me,’ she declared in her diary, describing herself as ‘speaking in the person of Elvira Pargiter.’¹⁰⁷ Reflecting on the letters of refusal she must write, Woolf wondered ‘how [...] to put Elvira’s language into polite journalese.’¹⁰⁸ ‘I hardly know which I am, or where,’ she writes; ‘Virginia or Elvira; in the Pargiters or outside.’¹⁰⁹ Although she was still only drafting the ‘1891’ section in the third notebook of *The Pargiters*, in which we first meet Elvira and Maggie as children, Woolf had already figured the adult Elvira’s ‘language’ as a political standpoint as much as a style of speech.

¹⁰³ L 5: 125.

¹⁰⁴ L 5: 141.

¹⁰⁵ Squier, ‘The Politics of City Space,’ 218-219.

¹⁰⁶ D 4: 152.

¹⁰⁷ D 4: 147.

¹⁰⁸ D 4: 148.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

The problem came when Woolf actually began to write Elvira. On 3 April 1933 Woolf made a start on 'Part Two,' set in 1902 in *The Pargiters* manuscript but later to be '1907' in *The Years*, in which Elvira/Sara sits up waiting for her sister to return from a party.¹¹⁰ After drafting two pages, Woolf turned over to start the section again. She had had this scene 'in [her] mind ever so many months,' but putting pen to paper she despaired 'I cant [*sic*] write it now.'¹¹¹ 'Elvira in bed' was 'the turn of the book,' but as Woolf wrote 'doubts rush[ed] in' and she sensed it 'need[ed] a great shove to swing it round on it hinges.'¹¹² 'The figure of Elvira is the difficulty,' Woolf reflected nine days later, as she once more pondered how to bring argument and illustration together within the novel format.¹¹³ She 'must somehow comment' without interrupting the integrity of her narrative, but Woolf had realised that Elvira's role as social commentator might lead to the same didacticism and disjointedness she had hoped to avoid by removing the essay portions of her text.¹¹⁴ Woolf determined that to prevent Elvira from 'becom[ing] too dominant' she would have to present her 'only in relation to other things.'¹¹⁵ At the same time, her ideas on war and women were continually evolving in response to events across Europe.

As *The Pargiters* became a less explicitly polemical political text, Woolf became increasingly politically engaged. On 29 April 1933 she recorded meeting Bruno Walter, a German composer who had recently fled his country after Hitler gained power in January of that year. The details Woolf remembered from their conversation reflected her then current preoccupation with nationalism, fascism and how the masses can respond to both:

he kept on saying 'You must think of this awful reign of intolerance. You must think of the whole state of the world. [...] Our Germany—which I loved—with our tradition—our culture—We are now a disgrace.' [...] He will never go back there. [...] We must band together. We must refuse to meet any German. We must say they are uncivilised. We will not trade with them or play with them—

¹¹⁰ *D* 4: 149.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *D* 4: 152.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

we must make them feel themselves outcasts—not by fighting them; by ignoring them.¹¹⁶

Writing an essay on Oliver Goldsmith two months later, Woolf was similarly drawn to Goldsmith's peculiar anti-nationalism, his 'detached attitude and width of view,' and noted that he 'preferred to call himself a Citizen of the World rather than an Englishman.'¹¹⁷ These sentiments were soon to be echoed in the '1910' section of Woolf's *Pargiters* manuscript by Elvira and Maggie, written in July 1933, as they discuss at length whether they are, or would want to be 'Englishwomen.'¹¹⁸ On returning to her manuscript on 15 November 1934 to 'tackle re-reading & re-writing,' however, Woolf realised she faced the 'damnable disagreeable' task of 'compacting the vast mass' in order for 'each scene to be a scene.'¹¹⁹ By 30 December 1934 Elvira had become Sara; she still 'wanted to make S. & M. bold characters, using character dialogue' but as she continued the process of revision from manuscript to typescript to proof, Woolf found that Elvira/Sara's politics jarred with her story-telling and much of her speeches were eventually cut.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, sometime late in 1934, Woolf once more considered writing a non-fictional sequel to *A Room of One's Own*. This time it would be a 'Pamphlet.'¹²¹

Woolf first mentions her desire to write a separate feminist pamphlet on 1 January 1935. In her annual summary of books to write, Woolf includes both 'On being despised,' the emotive title through which she conceived *Three Guineas* at this time, and 'Ordinary People,' her current working-title for *The Years*.¹²² Her declaration that she 'must finish Ordinary People' although her mind is 'pumping up ideas' for 'Despised' echoes two years previously when she could not proceed with *The Pargiters* until *Flush* was done and dusted.¹²³ This tension continued over the next two years, as Woolf struggled with the novel she would not complete until December 1936 whilst constantly thinking of the new project she planned not to begin in earnest until the first was finished. Throughout 1935 numerous conversations and events prompted Woolf to

¹¹⁶ D 4: 153.

¹¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, 'Oliver Goldsmith,' in CE 1, 108.

¹¹⁸ Woolf, *The Pargiters* MS, M.42, 4: 56-67. See Appendix B for a transcription of these pages.

¹¹⁹ D 4: 261.

¹²⁰ D 4: 266.

¹²¹ D 4: 282.

¹²² D 4: 271.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

expand her feminist politics and to consider how she might express her feminist opinions in a prose work. An invitation from Elizabeth Bibesco to join the committee of an anti-Fascist exhibition led to a debate between Bibesco and Woolf about the relevance of ‘the women question’ to their campaign.¹²⁴ ‘I am afraid it had not occurred to me,’ Woolf quotes Bibesco as having pointedly written, ‘that in matters of ultimate importance even feminists c[ould] wish to segregate and label the sexes.’¹²⁵ A month later, when Woolf refers to her prose work she records being ‘plagued by the sudden wish to write an Anti fascist Pamphlet.’¹²⁶

A conversation with E. M. Forster in April 1935 turned Woolf’s attention back to the casual sexism of Britain’s educated classes. Forster’s chance remark about the London Library’s refusal to ‘allow ladies’ in their committee despite his rather patronising proposal that ‘ladies [have] improved,’ sent Woolf ‘into a passion’ of composing phrases for ‘Being Despised.’¹²⁷ ‘[T]hese flares up are very good for my book,’ she considered, ‘for they simmer & become transparent: & I see how I can transmute them into beautiful clear reasonable ironical prose.’¹²⁸ The title and this diary entry reveal Woolf’s first intention to compose a pamphlet that considered male animosity to women and the disadvantaged position they have historically occupied. Meanwhile, however, along with the rest of the country Woolf was increasingly aware of the threat of war escalating as the media reported ‘incessant conversations—Mussolini, Hitler, Macdonald.’¹²⁹ She and Leonard decided to consult an acquaintance in the Foreign Office about their plan to drive through Germany the following month on their way to holiday in Italy.¹³⁰ ‘How far could I let myself go in an anti fascist pamphlet,’ Woolf considered as Ralph Wigram was ‘a little defensive about Jews in Germany’ and advised them against the route.¹³¹ Despite his reservations, in May the Woolfs entered Germany and inadvertently found themselves in the middle of a reception for Goering in Bonn.¹³² Having witnessed ‘[b]anners stretched across the

¹²⁴ D 4: 273.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ D 4: 282.

¹²⁷ D 4: 297-298.

¹²⁸ D 4: 298.

¹²⁹ D 4: 303.

¹³⁰ D 4: 301-302.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² D 4: 298.

street' declaring 'The Jew is our enemy' at first-hand, Woolf records her 'anger' at both 'the docile hysterical crowd' with their 'rather forced' support of the National Socialist Party, and at herself and Leonard, for having also made themselves 'obsequious' to such a regime in order to pass through German customs and the rally unnoticed.¹³³

In June 1935, reading a review of Mary Moore's *The Defeat of Women* with its complaint that 'women have dropped their sacred task' of motherhood brought Woolf back to thinking about the oppressive gender roles of her own country and 'flood[ed]' her mind with her 'Professions book.'¹³⁴ The title change – back from 'anti fascist pamphlet' to 'my Professions book' – sounds as if Woolf is considering writing two separate critical works at this time. Yet this inconsistency may just reflect how Woolf's envisaged polemic was constantly changing shape during this turbulent year as her feminist and political convictions evolved. Many factors contributed to Woolf's new prose work even before she had begun writing it. In August 1935, it was hearing of her 'American fame' and 'how a room of ones [*sic*] own is regarded' across the Atlantic that awoke Woolf's 'insensate obsession' to write her prospective sequel.¹³⁵ Harold Nicholson's news flattered her vanity and bolstered her confidence as a feminist thinker, but it also suggested a receptive and lucrative market for her planned political pamphlet in America. This consideration was important when Woolf had already spent nearly three years tied up with one novel, while the British economic slump led Leonard to again predict 'a very lean year at the Press.'¹³⁶

By October, after attending the Labour Party conference in Brighton, Woolf 'couldn't resist dashing off a chapter' of *Three Guineas*, which she was then referring to as 'The Next War.'¹³⁷ At the conference, Woolf had witnessed Edward Bevin's devastating attack on George Lansbury's pacifism and Lansbury's subsequent resignation as leader of the Labour Party. 'Tears came to my eyes as L[ansbury] spoke,' Woolf noted in her diary.¹³⁸ The event prompted Woolf to consider her own position and the extent of her accountability for Britain's involvement in international politics. On the one hand she questioned her 'duty as a human being' in this matter and

¹³³ D 4: 311.

¹³⁴ D 4: 323. Mary Moore, *The Defeat of Woman* (London: C. W. Daniel, 1935).

¹³⁵ D 4: 335.

¹³⁶ D 4: 353.

¹³⁷ D 4: 346.

¹³⁸ D 4: 345.

decided her 'sympathies were with [Dr Alfred] Salter who preached non-resistance'; on the other, she excused herself from the obligation of forming an opinion with the inaccurate portrayal of herself as disenfranchised – '[h]appily, uneducated & voteless, I am not responsible for the state of society.'¹³⁹ Women had of course gained equal voting rights with men in 1928 but Woolf continued to feel herself an outsider to the governmental institutions of her country. She regarded women as less accountable for war-making than men since they had so long been excluded from the procedures of parliament and so had not yet had time to assert their political opinions. This belief in women's lesser responsibility for the current political situation did not, however, prevent Woolf from responding actively to it.

David Bradshaw has detailed Woolf's involvement in two antifascist groups from 1935: the British Section of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture (IAWDC) and For Intellectual Liberty (FIL).¹⁴⁰ Her support for the former originated from her role on the organising committee of the British delegation to the International Congress of Writers in Paris in June 1935 at which the IAWDC was formed.¹⁴¹ Although Woolf did not attend the congress, according to Bradshaw 'in its wake she, Forster, Stephen Spender and Ralph Fox' all helped 'in establishing the British Section of the IAWDC.'¹⁴² Bradshaw deduces that Woolf was part of the organisation, chaired by Cecil Day-Lewis, until August 1936 when she 'finally resigned' feeling 'harass[ed]' and 'abused' by the constant tensions between committee members.¹⁴³ By this time Woolf had already become associated with FIL, a group consisting of a broader spread of progressive artists and intellectuals including Leonard Woolf, who was a leading member. '[A]lthough Woolf did not enrol as a member of FIL,' Bradshaw contends, 'her role as an FIL panellist and her vantage point as Leonard Woolf's partner meant that she still moved very much within that milieu.'¹⁴⁴ She was present at the organisation's first pilot meeting on 5 December 1935 along with W. H. Auden, Vanessa Bell, Aldous Huxley, Storm Jameson, Henry Moore and John

¹³⁹ *D* 4: 345-346.

¹⁴⁰ David Bradshaw, 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s,' 2 Parts, *Woolf Studies Annual* 3 (1997): 3-27; and *Woolf Studies Annual* 4 (1998): 41-66.

¹⁴¹ Bradshaw, 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s,' 1: 6.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 1: 9.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1: 15; quotations taken from a letter from Woolf to Ethel Smyth on 3 August 1936 (*L* 6: 62).

¹⁴⁴ Bradshaw, 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s,' 2: 48.

Strachey.¹⁴⁵ In the following year the FIL ‘held regular meetings under its vice-chairman, Leonard Woolf, in the drawing room next to Virginia’s study.’¹⁴⁶ Woolf signed her name to several FIL pamphlets campaigning against individual cases of injustice, such as the continued imprisonment of the German journalist and pacifist Carl von Ossietzky, interned without trial by the Nazis on 28 February 1933, but during 1936 she became increasingly suspicious of the group’s ‘high-minded general appeals ... “for united action in defence of peace, liberty and culture”’.¹⁴⁷ ‘[Woolf] was now operating as an Outsider,’ Bradshaw argues, ‘working against fascism in her own way and on her own terms.’¹⁴⁸ He astutely notes the implicit challenge to FIL’s campaign literature present in the later assertion of Woolf’s female narrator to her male correspondent in *Three Guineas*; ‘We can only help you to defend culture and intellectual liberty by defending our own culture and our own liberty.’¹⁴⁹ While Woolf was closely linked to the activities of Britain’s antifascist intelligentsia in the mid-1930s she could not sympathise with the sentimentalised, homogenising view of British culture set forth in the antifascist letters ‘with which she [was] ... inundated.’¹⁵⁰

On 29 December 1935, Woolf recorded writing ‘the last words to The Years.’¹⁵¹ A day later she ‘had an idea [...] how to make [her] war book’:

to pretend its [*sic*] all the articles editors have ever asked me to write during the past few years [...]. Sh[ould] Women smoke. Short skirts. War—&c. This w[oul]d give me the right to wander: also put me in the position of the one asked. [...] And there might be a preface saying this. to [*sic*] give the right tone.¹⁵²

The sudden conception of her pamphlet as a series of epistolary responses was reflected by a new title on 3 January 1936: ‘Answers to Correspondents.’¹⁵³ At this moment, with the structure of her pamphlet found, the perception of women and their sexuality within British society was still crucial to her ‘war book,’ as indicated by her references

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1: 21-22.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 15.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2: 48-58. Internal quotation taken from the FIL’s ‘General Appeal’ brochure of May 1936, circulated with a request for funds; quoted in Bradshaw, 2: 42-43, 58.

¹⁴⁸ Bradshaw, ‘British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s,’ 2: 48.

¹⁴⁹ *TG*, 282-283. See Bradshaw, ‘British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s,’ 2: 58.

¹⁵⁰ Bradshaw, ‘British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s,’ 2: 59.

¹⁵¹ *D* 4: 360.

¹⁵² *D* 4: 361.

¹⁵³ *D* 5: 3.

to debating '[s]hort skirts' and whether 'women [should] smoke.'¹⁵⁴ However, the influence of Woolf's contact with the British Section of the IAWDC and FIL and their campaign letters through the early months of 1936 seem to have shifted Woolf's focus onto the single question of war and how women can respond to the call to prevent it. This shift is reflected in the new title Woolf gave to the work on 8 March 1936, 'Letter to an Englishman.'¹⁵⁵ The change from plural to singular, from the sexless 'Correspondents' to an 'Englishman,' suggests Woolf's discomfort with the patriotic sentiment and patriarchal bias of the antifascist campaign material she received in this period. Soon after, Woolf found the framing device of giving 'Two Guineas' on 14 March 1936,¹⁵⁶ and her final title, '3 Gs,' on 24 November 1936.¹⁵⁷ Despite having largely planned the framework and title for her polemic by March 1936, the development of *Three Guineas* through this period was suspended as Woolf still struggled to complete *The Years*. The first draft of her novel had been finished in December 1935 but it was not until 30 December 1936 that Woolf was able to sit down with 'the galleys' and record that they were 'to go off today.'¹⁵⁸ Work on *The Years* proofs and *Three Guineas* was postponed in the summer of 1936 as Woolf suffered her worse mental health breakdown since 1912-1913. Yet the preparatory thinking she had dedicated to her envisioned pamphlet early in 1936 meant that once Woolf finally set to it in January 1937, the core writing of *Three Guineas* was completed in only nine months.

On 12 October 1937 Woolf recorded having written 'ten minutes ago [...] what I think is the last page of 3 Gs.'¹⁵⁹ It was not quite the last page of course; the bibliography & notes were still to be added, and the revision process predictably took longer than planned. Woolf's ironic inclusion of inverted commas when declaring she had once more "'finished" the last chapter of *Three Guineas*' on 9 January 1938 indicate her frustration with the never-ending project.¹⁶⁰ Yet there was a fierce energy to her writing of *Three Guineas* which revived her after the recent drudgery of *The Years* and oddly echoed her first enthusiastic months of writing that novel. 'It has pressed &

¹⁵⁴ D 4: 361.

¹⁵⁵ D 5: 18.

¹⁵⁶ D 5: 20.

¹⁵⁷ D 5: 35.

¹⁵⁸ D 5: 44.

¹⁵⁹ D 5: 112.

¹⁶⁰ D 5: 125.

spurted out of me [...] like a physical volcano,' Woolf noted on 12 October 1937 as she reflected back on how *Three Guineas* had evolved through the last five years:

And my brain feels cool & quiet after the expulsion. I've had it sizzling now since—well I was thinking of it at Delphi I remember. And then I forced myself to put it into fiction first. No, the fiction came first. The Years. And how I held myself back, all through the terrible depression, & refused, save for some frantic notes, to tap it until The Years—that awful burden—was off me. So that I have deserved this gallop. And taken time & thought too. But whether good or bad how can I tell?¹⁶¹

There can be no doubt from this quotation that Woolf saw *The Years* and *Three Guineas* as part of the same undertaking. The reference to 'Delphi' dates *Three Guineas*'s first 'sizzling' in her mind to May 1932, when Woolf was on holiday in Greece, considering the 'psychology' of 'male virtues' and 'thinking of the book [*The Pargiters*] again.'¹⁶² Her polemic may finally have come out at a 'gallop' but, as Woolf writes, it had 'taken time & thought too.'¹⁶³ She first describes *The Years* as *Three Guineas* 'put [...] into fiction,' but then interestingly corrects herself with the assertion that 'the fiction came first.'¹⁶⁴ This adjustment suggests that 'the fiction,' *The Years*, was in fact a separate unit, which asserted itself before *Three Guineas* could be fully conceived. The fact that Woolf struggles with such subtleties when describing the evolution of her texts should once more remind us not to over-simplify their genetic history as we look back on their development. Closer examination of the manuscript and typescript draft material relating to *Three Guineas* further demonstrates that although linear, the process through which this work was conceived, planned, written and published was far from straightforward.

The Composition of *Three Guineas*: Organising and Dating the Dossier

The writing of *Three Guineas* is evidenced by a large selection of pre-texts of varying length and coherence. The following discussion will organise this extensive dossier of draft materials into a history of *Three Guineas*'s composition, tracing the revisionary process through which the 'Professions for Women' typescript evolved into a feminist-

¹⁶¹ D 5: 112.

¹⁶² D 4: 95.

¹⁶³ D 5: 112.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

pacifist pamphlet. G. Thomas Tanselle distinguishes between two types of authorial revision: ‘that which aims at altering the purpose, direction, or character of a work, thus attempting to make a different sort of work out of it; and that which aims at intensifying, refining, or improving the work ... in degree but not in kind.’¹⁶⁵ ‘If one may think of a work in terms of a spatial metaphor,’ Tanselle suggests, ‘the first might be labelled “vertical revision,” because it moves the work to a different plane, and the second “horizontal revision,” because it involves alterations within the same plane.’¹⁶⁶ As a scholarly editor, Tanselle categorises authorial intention as a means of identifying a ‘final’ version and selecting a copy-text, but the distinction he draws between ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ revisions provides a useful critical tool for describing the evolution of *Three Guineas*. If Woolf’s intention is taken to be the idea she wishes to express in her text then her decision to leave out the ‘interchapters’ from *The Pargiters* in 1933, although a major change in genre, can be described as a horizontal revision since the core intention of her text, to represent women’s oppressed position within British patriarchal society, remains the same. In contrast, the fluctuating references to *Three Guineas* in 1935, as an ‘anti fascist pamphlet’ then ‘my Professions book,’ then a work titled ‘the Next War,’ might represent a series of vertical revisions since these suggest shifts in subject matter. The evolution of Woolf’s ‘one book’ in the 1930s must be owned to contain both alterations ‘within the same plane’ and those which move the text into a new plane in an attempt to make ‘a different sort of work out of it.’¹⁶⁷

As previously stated, no complete manuscript or typescript draft of *Three Guineas* survives.¹⁶⁸ The largest remaining draft fragment is a ninety-page holograph of the third chapter, grouped together in a loose leaf folder alongside a forty-one page typescript draft of the first chapter, with twenty-one miscellaneous typescript pages and two odd holograph pages laid in at the end (M.28). A fifty-seven page typescript of Woolf’s second chapter titled ‘The Second Guinea’ (M.29) also remains, along with fifteen further miscellaneous typed pages (M.29; M.127). Although not coherent

¹⁶⁵ Tanselle, ‘The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention,’ 193.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ There is some speculation as to the location of a further manuscript of *Three Guineas* which Woolf reported having donated to the American Guild for German Cultural Freedom in February 1939; see *L* 6: 314, 319. Wisor details the history and debate regarding this manuscript, which is now generally assumed to be lost or to be the largest surviving holograph draft (M.28) held by the NYPL; see Wisor, ‘Versioning Virginia Woolf,’ 511-513.

drafted versions, the earliest and most sizeable documents relating to the development of Woolf's envisaged new book on the sexual life of women are the three notebooks of feminist and pacifist research Woolf assembled throughout the early to mid-1930s (B.16f, 3 vols). Yet, as Naomi Black astutely highlights, the 'wealth of material available about the evolution of *Three Guineas*' also extends well beyond these three scrapbooks to 'the sixty-four "reading notebooks" that Virginia Woolf prepared over thirty-six years of her life as a professional writer.'¹⁶⁹ My thesis as a whole traces such wider genetic links in Woolf's oeuvre to explore her gradual development as a cultural critic, but limits must be imposed within this chapter's genetic study of *Three Guineas* in order to create a manageable dossier. 'The questions of precisely *what* may be said to constitute a version of *Three Guineas*,' Wisor notes, 'and precisely *where* the boundaries of the work are situated are contentious at best.'¹⁷⁰ Only texts and reading notes directly connected to the evolution of *Three Guineas* are regarded here as versions of the work. There are another eight sets of Woolf's reading notes that relate directly to *Three Guineas* (B.16a, B.16b, B.16c, B.16d, B.16e, M.1.6, M.30, M.40), several of which incorporate short draft passages from the text. Four of these are catalogued by Silver as 'Reading Notebooks': RN XXXIII (M.30), RN LV (B.16a), RN LVI (B.16b) and RN LVII (B.16e). The juxtaposition of reading notes and draft fragments in many of these documents illustrates how interconnected the activities of research and writing remained within Woolf's feminist project even in the later stages of *Three Guineas*'s composition. Some of these documents are dated in full; some with only a day, a month, or a year, and some are not dated at all. Any attempt to construct a chronology for these texts is evidently open to dispute.¹⁷¹ The first documents considered here are the three reading scrapbooks that Woolf began in response to her conception of a sequel to *A Room of One's Own* in 1931. These texts provide an overview of Woolf's research through the decade for both *The Years* and *Three Guineas*.

¹⁶⁹ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 52.

¹⁷⁰ Wisor, 'Versioning Virginia Woolf,' 500 (emphasis in original).

¹⁷¹ For another account of *Three Guineas*'s composition see Chapter 3 of Black's *Woolf as Feminist* and the introduction to her edition of *Three Guineas* (2001), xviii-xxx. Where my conclusions draw on Black in this section this negotiation is acknowledged.

The Scrapbooks

Woolf's three scrapbooks filled with research specific to her major feminist works of the 1930s look noticeably different to her regular records of her reading. Each volume is filled with newspaper cuttings, letters, pamphlets, as well as typed and hand-written quotations from articles and books dating from the period. These numerous clippings and fragments of copied passages are fixed in Woolf's scrapbooks with adhesive labels; publication dates are often included for newspaper articles, but not for extracts from books. Periodicals cited include *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Observer*, the *Listener*, the *Evening Standard* and the *Nation*, although newspapers are not necessarily identified unless they happen to remain on the header or footer of a cutting. There are no dates to signal when Woolf affixed material and items do not appear chronologically. This lack of chronological sequence indicates that rather than regularly updating her scrapbooks in reaction to the morning's paper or her current reading, Woolf hoarded material and then sat down to sustained periods of research, sifting through old papers and previous reading and collecting the results in these volumes. The material represented spans from the late 1920s through to late 1937. Although Woolf finished the major writing of *Three Guineas* in October 1937, she continued adding to her third scrapbook as she worked on the notes.

These scrapbooks present an unusual pre-text for a genetic study. They remind us that Woolf was a professional journalist and that her sequel to *A Room of One's Own* was at first envisioned as a literary work that would draw on her experience of journalistic practices. Her sifting of historical and cultural evidence through the collation of newspaper articles suggests the action of newspaper clippings services employed by journalists and researchers to deliver them the latest relevant information for their research and writing. These three volumes reveal the thinking rather than the writing process of *Three Guineas*, although these two processes are interlinked and there are incidents of linguistic correlation between the clippings and the text. The scrapbooks offer surprising insights into the evolution of the work's form as well as its content. Woolf's collection of campaign letters in the second volume, for example, as my discussion will outline, relates to her conception of *Three Guineas*'s innovative structure. These scrapbooks also evidence the development of Woolf's cultural criticism in this period through their provocative juxtapositions of research material,

and reveal that Woolf turned her attention out from British sexual politics to contemplate international politics long before her published writings evidenced this shift. Much of the material contained in the three scrapbooks was finally included in the discursive secondary references that append Woolf's polemic. The purpose of her first notebook, however, was to collect factual information with which to substantiate the fictional portrayal of the Pargiter family in her envisaged 'novel-essay.' These documents are pre-texts for *The Pargiters* and *The Years* as well as *Three Guineas*.

Woolf's first reading notebook relating to *Three Guineas* was begun in 1931 and appears to have been completed in 1933. Items collected include an extract from C. E. M. Joad on women's negative effect on conversation, an article by the Countess of Lovelace (Mary Caroline Wortley) on 'The Chaperonage Age,' and William Gerhardi's assertion that women novelists are not 'serious fellow artists.'¹⁷² The quotations from Joad, Lovelace and Gerhardi later appear in the notes for *Three Guineas*, but each of these references also informed Woolf's writing of *The Pargiters*. Tracing the history of Woolf's use of Lovelace from 1932-1938, for example, indicates the pervasive influence that research evidenced in these scrapbooks had on both her novel and polemic. Woolf's discussion of the threat of 'street love' to young women in the second *Pargiters* essay, written somewhere between 23 October and 11 November 1932, includes a quotation from Lovelace from the *Times* article printed in March that year, which Woolf had collected in her first scrapbook.¹⁷³ The essay contains Lovelace's recollection of living 'near St. James's Street and all the clubs' in the late nineteenth century, 'so that for my sisters and me to go out alone into the streets would have been to defy the social taboo in its severest form.'¹⁷⁴ Yet 'there were [...] "quiet squares and terraces in the outlying districts,' Woolf records in Lovelace's words, 'where young

¹⁷² Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 3 Vols., 1: 2, 29, 32; all references to the scrapbooks can be found in Neverow and Pawlowski's *Three Guineas Scrapbooks: A Digital Archive*. Publication details of works in the scrapbooks have been determined with help from Neverow and Pawlowski's bibliography and appendices D and E of Black's edition of *Three Guineas* (2001). Where supplied, page numbers given for quotations from these works are Woolf's own and have not been verified. C. E. M. Joad, *Under the Fifth Rib: A Belligerent Autobiography* (London: Faber, 1934); Mary Caroline Wortley, Countess of Lovelace, 'Fifty Years, Society and the Season, The Chaperoned Age,' *The Times*, 9 March 1932, 13-14; William Alexander Gerhardi, *Memoirs of a Polyglot* (London: Duckworth, 1931), 320.

¹⁷³ *TP*, 36-37.

¹⁷⁴ *TP*, 37.

girls could at least go about in pairs.’”¹⁷⁵ ‘Happily for the Pargiters,’ she asserts, ‘Abercorn Terrace came under this heading.’¹⁷⁶ Woolf had evoked the freedom felt by women able to walk without a chaperone previously with her portrayal of married Clarissa Dalloway’s exhilaration at wandering without restraint through post-war Westminster, but this extract enables her to verify her depiction of the restrictive social taboo that prevented young women from walking alone in parts of central London in 1880. When Woolf came to write *Three Guineas* this section on chaperonage was not included. A large body of quotation from Lovelace’s article was struck out from a fragmentary typescript of the first chapter, but two other extracts were quoted from Lovelace in extensive references.¹⁷⁷ Lovelace’s description of the ‘suppos[ition] that most men were not “virtuous”’ appears in the first note as one reason why the nineteenth-century daughters of educated men were ‘confined to a very narrow circle’ and kept in ignorance of life and books.¹⁷⁸ A later note to the first chapter also includes a paragraph from ‘Society and Season’ on the role of shooting ‘as a lure’ to bring eligible young men into the households of the upper-middle classes.¹⁷⁹ These quotations support Woolf’s satirical declaration in the full-text that ‘The influence of the pheasant upon love alone deserves a chapter to itself.’¹⁸⁰ The changing use of this source between the novel and the polemic suggests both vertical leaps in the shifting profile of these works and a horizontal thread that connects them; her critique of the strict gender roles of nineteenth-century Britain and their oppressive effect on women appears differently in each text but remains central to both.

The most influential and previously well-documented secondary sources for *The Pargiters* in Woolf’s first notebook include Stephen Gwynn’s *The Life of Mary Kingsley* and Elizabeth Mary Wright’s *The Life of Joseph Wright*.¹⁸¹ A type-written note on page 33 records Mary Kingsley’s confession ‘that being allowed to learn

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* No exact location is specified for Abercorn Terrace in either *The Pargiters* or *The Years*.

¹⁷⁷ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*: fragments, M.28, in VW: MA, 119; TG, 369, 381-382. In the notes to *Three Guineas* Woolf quotes from a later version of Lovelace’s article published in *The Times* edited collection, *Fifty Years, Memories and Contrasts: A Composite Picture of the Period 1882-1932* (London: Butterworth, 1932).

¹⁷⁸ TG, 369.

¹⁷⁹ TG, 382.

¹⁸⁰ TG, 206-207.

¹⁸¹ Stephen Gwynn, *The Life of Mary Kingsley* (London: Macmillan, 1932); Elizabeth Mary Wright, *The Life of Joseph Wright*, 2 Vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

German was all the paid-for education' she received, while '£2000 was spent on [her] brother's'.¹⁸² This quotation emerges in the second essay of *The Pargiters*, with reference to the sisters' limited education and Delia's inability to study music in Germany as she would wish.¹⁸³ It chimes repeatedly through *Three Guineas* indicating a clear horizontal progression through the scrapbook, novel-essay and polemic.¹⁸⁴ Extracts from volume one of *The Life of Joseph Wright* were pasted in the first scrapbook after 26 July 1932. Wright was a famous dialect scholar and Professor of Comparative Philology at the University of Oxford from 1901-1925, a self-schooled son of a working mother whose strong egalitarian principles were reflected in his unconventionally equal partnership with his wife Elizabeth, a former Oxford student. Woolf's earliest reference to the couple appears in her diary on 13 July 1932.¹⁸⁵ In December, whilst writing *The Pargiters*, Woolf included a marginal reference to Wright in the fifth chapter as Kitty visits the Brook family, and numerous references to the Wrights in the sixth essay.¹⁸⁶ The Wrights' union is depicted as an ideal marriage and his 'views on education, society and the proper conduct of life' are presented as enlightened.¹⁸⁷ Woolf argues that 'the force at the back of [his] opinions was [...] that Joseph Wright himself had received no schooling: he was not the product of Eton or Harrow' but was 'much more profoundly influenced by his mother.'¹⁸⁸ Although references to Wright were revised out of *The Years*, the mark of this reading remains in the published novel. Leaska details how Wright's life informed Woolf's portrayal of Mr Brook/Robson in '1880,' while the verb 'parget' – 'to plaster with cement or mortar,' and by extension, to 'whitewash' – taken from Wright's dialect dictionary, may well have influenced her choice of the family name Pargiter.¹⁸⁹ In the appendix of *Three Guineas* Joseph Wright surfaces again, indicating a circuitous but still perceptible link between the novel and the essay.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸² Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 1: 33; Gwynn, *Life of Mary Kingsley*, 15.

¹⁸³ *TP*, 31.

¹⁸⁴ *TG*, 156, 183-184, 266, 368, 410.

¹⁸⁵ *D* 4: 115-116; here Woolf declared the Wrights to be 'people I respect' and hoped 'the 2nd vol. will come this morning.'

¹⁸⁶ *TP*, 135, 154-158.

¹⁸⁷ *TP*, 158.

¹⁸⁸ *TP*, 155-156.

¹⁸⁹ Mitchell A. Leaska, introduction to *TP*, xiv; see also Leaska's 'Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of *The Years*,' *Bulletin of the NYPL* 80: 2 (1977): 172-210.

¹⁹⁰ *TG*, 402.

Material in the first scrapbook also has an interesting bearing on the fictional drafts of *The Pargiters* manuscript that are not included in Leaska's transcription. A *Times* article from 10 January 1933 on 'the paucity of young women' in church, for example, was collected after Woolf had decided to leave out the 'interchapters' and relates to the later fictional draft of the work.¹⁹¹ Canon F. R. Barry's warning that the decline in young women attending services stemmed from 'a growing suspicion that they were not really wanted by the Church' parallels Elvira and Maggie's discussion of their alienation from Britain's socio-political institutions in the draft of the after-dinner scene in '1910'; here the two women assert that 'to accept the teaching of the Archbishop of Canterbury with regard to baptism, marriage, & burial, & the nature & conduct of the soul both here & hereafter' is something they 'are not prepared to do.'¹⁹² The article may not appear in the text of the novel but its influence is evident. In the third chapter of *Three Guineas*, Woolf's narrator quotes Canon Barry at length on the absence of young women in church, in order to propose that the daughters of educated men recognise the power of 'absent[ing] themselves' as a political tool.¹⁹³ This discussion echoes Elvira's earlier suggestion in the novel that an anti-suffrage stance could be a form of protest against current government. Similarly, a list of figures in the first scrapbook detailing the continued cost of the Great War to Britain, Germany, and their allies in the early 1930s indicates both the breadth of Woolf's cultural criticism while writing the later chapters of *The Years*, and also, from a retrospective viewpoint, the shift in focus that would lead to the writing of *Three Guineas*.¹⁹⁴

The article that begins Woolf's second reading notebook is dated 4 March 1936, although the volume also contains material from 1934-1935. The scrapbook was finished early in 1937. These dates suggest a gap of two or three years in Woolf's collection of material, perhaps while she focussed on the difficult process of writing *The Pargiters*. However, an additional document presents an overlap between the first and second scrapbooks. Almost all of the text in Reading Notebook XXXIII is duplicated elsewhere in Woolf's scrapbooks of cuttings. This spiral-bound notebook contains

¹⁹¹ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 1: 63; 'Young Women and the Church: A Suspicion That They Are Not Wanted,' *The Times*, 10 January 1933, 14.

¹⁹² Woolf, *The Pargiters* MS, M.42, 4: 66.

¹⁹³ *TG*, 327.

¹⁹⁴ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 1: 59; here Woolf lists estimated spending on defence and war pensions from Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Home Front: A Mirror to Life in England during the First World War* (London: Hutchinson, 1932), 446.

thirty-nine pages of longhand passages copied from books, ranging from *The Life of Joseph Wright* to Laura Knight's *Oil Paint and Grease Paint*.¹⁹⁵ As Silver observes, 'the chronology of the notebooks is uncertain.'¹⁹⁶ Did Woolf continue researching for her new work in this notebook after finishing her first scrapbook in 1933 and then later transfer her observations into a new scrapbook in 1936 alongside her collected press-cuttings? This possible chronology matches the publication years of the material collected yet seems unlikely; why would Woolf have chosen to copy out thirty-nine pages of notes twice? It is more probable that the purpose of this fourth notebook was to record research completed in a library, which Woolf would then type out for inclusion in the larger volumes of press-cuttings on returning home. This contention is supported by the notebook being top-bound, relatively small and easily portable, and by the lack of clippings or passages from sources other than monographs within its leaves. The notebook would therefore have been kept concurrently with Woolf's first and second scrapbooks, rather than post- or pre-dating either. A break therefore does seem to exist in Woolf's collection of material from 1933-1936. When she resumed the practice of keeping cuttings and quotations in a second notebook in 1936, Woolf had already envisioned her pamphlet as a collection of 'Answers to Correspondents.'¹⁹⁷

Material in the second and third scrapbook was collected following her writing of the first manuscript version of *The Years* and with the idea of a separate, explicitly feminist-pacifist pamphlet in mind. An article on the third page of the second notebook responds to Woolf's exploration of the changing limits of democracy in her novel. The text details a speech on the subject of England as 'The Home of Liberty' given at the banquet of The Society of St George in October 1935 by Lord Hewart, then Lord Chief Justice of England.¹⁹⁸ 'It may be that our buildings have failed to reach a spectacular height,' Hewart declares, drawing a comparison with America, '[but] England is the home of democratic institutions—that is to say, of the system of government which

¹⁹⁵ Virginia Woolf, Reading Notebook XXXIII, M.30, in *VW: MA*, 12, 35; Laura Knight, *Oil Paint and Grease Paint* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1936).

¹⁹⁶ Brenda R. Silver, *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 161.

¹⁹⁷ *D* 5: 3.

¹⁹⁸ 'Lord Hewart on England—Home of Liberty/A Castle that Will be Defended to the Last,' an unidentified newspaper cutting dated 19 October 1935; collected in Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 2: 3.

makes every citizen responsible.’¹⁹⁹ As ‘democratic institutions are under fire all over Europe,’ Hewart argues that England ‘will be defended to the last.’²⁰⁰ ‘For those who have been trained in English schools and English universities, and who have done the work of their lives in England,’ he insists, ‘there are few loves stronger than the love we have for our country.’²⁰¹ The patriotic sentiments expressed here are exactly those Elvira and Maggie oppose in ‘1910’ and against which Woolf rails throughout *Three Guineas*. Woolf argues that women cannot possibly share this male patriotism because they do not enjoy the same access to English schools and English universities as the sons of educated men. Lord Hewart’s words represent the national self-praise Woolf ridicules in the third chapter of *Three Guineas*. This article was not included in the published version of the essay but Lord Hewart was pictured, as Alice Staveley has identified, in the fourth of the five photographs that intersect the text.²⁰² Formerly a journalist and Liberal MP before his outspoken term as Lord Chief Justice, Hewart would have been easily recognisable to contemporary readers pictured in his judicial robes and wig.²⁰³ Hewart is one of many possible figures Woolf could have included in *Three Guineas* as a representative patriarch, but he is also specifically connected, in her mind at least, with the self-satisfied patriotism recorded in this article.

Woolf first suggested the idea of including ‘4 pictures’ in her envisaged feminist sequel on 16 February 1932 while collecting material in her first notebook but the photographs to which she refers here have not been identified.²⁰⁴ The photographs used in *Three Guineas* do not appear in the reading scrapbooks, but in the second volume Woolf does begin collecting photographs of representatives of patriarchy and

¹⁹⁹ ‘Lord Hewart on England’ [unidentified cutting]; quotations from Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 2: 3.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² See Alice Staveley, ‘Name That Face,’ *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 51 (1998): 4-5. In her introduction to *Three Guineas* (2006), Jane Marcus credits Staveley with identifying Hewart in one of the five *Three Guineas* photographs but notes he was then Lord Chief Justice not ‘the sitting lord chancellor,’ lxii.

²⁰³ Hewart wrote for the *Manchester Guardian* and *Morning Leader* during his early distinguished career in parliament. After his appointment as Lord Chief Justice in 1922 he became a more controversial figure whose ‘feuds during the 1920s and 1930s [were] famous’; see Robert Stevens, ‘Hewart, Gordon, first Viscount Hewart (1870–1943),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Web site and database] (Oxford University Press, 2004-2008); available from <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33846>>; accessed 19 December 2008.

²⁰⁴ D 4: 77.

authoritarianism.²⁰⁵ Figures represented include: Major Emil Fey, pictured in military uniform, Austria's former Vice-Chancellor who organised the violent suppression of the country's leftist Social Democrats in 1934; Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian politician and Mussolini's son-in-law, 'in flying kit'; the Pope, pictured in robes at a celebration of his seventy-ninth birthday in Rome; and four Heralds from the British royal household in ornate state dress proclaiming the date of King Edward VIII's coronation.²⁰⁶ While these photographs predate those incorporated in *Three Guineas* their subjects clearly foreshadow the pictures of military, religious and governmental figures dressed in extravagantly symbolic public clothing that Woolf chose for inclusion in the printed text. Emily Dalgarno states that '[t]he theme of Fascism appeared late in the period of the notebooks,' and argues that they 'suggest a writer who until 1936 was concerned primarily with local problems of gender and class.'²⁰⁷ Yet Woolf's inclusion of a photograph of Major Fey from 1935, combined with her reference to Bibesco's Anti-Fascist exhibition and her involvement in the British Section of the IAWDC that year suggests otherwise.²⁰⁸ Although her thoughts on fascism are not collected in the notebooks until 1936, Woolf's cultural criticism had evidently expanded beyond local problems of gender and class before this point. The presence of several photographs of continental dictatorial figures in Woolf's second scrapbook reveals a familiarity with European politics that is only implicitly present in her printed essay. The need to recognise and attack the dictator at home in order to defend against fascism led Woolf to include photographs of British patriarchal figures in *Three Guineas* rather than dictators abroad.

Also included in the second *Three Guineas* scrapbook are several campaign letters requesting Woolf's support, from religious, educational and political organisations. These letters, and those included later in the third volume, evidently reflect Woolf's recent decision to structure her polemic as a series of epistolary

²⁰⁵ For an authoritative discussion of Woolf's use of photographs in *Three Guineas*, both the five printed photographs of British patriarchs and the absent photographs of fascist atrocities repeatedly referenced in the narrative, see Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography and Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), Chapter 6.

²⁰⁶ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 2: 5, 20, 44, 46. The photograph of Emil Fey is dated 18 October 1935, the day after Fey's retirement. Its source is unidentified. The photograph of four Heralds proclaiming Edward VIII's coronation is taken from the *Daily Telegraph* and dated 30 May 1936.

²⁰⁷ Emily Dalgarno, *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155.

²⁰⁸ Bradshaw, 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s,' 1: 6-9.

responses late in December 1935. The first and most unexpected request in the second notebook is from the Deane Congregational Church in Bolton, dated 23 January 1936. In longhand, the writer asks if Woolf might provide any items to sell on a ‘Celebrity Stall’ at a fundraising bazaar held jointly by ‘a united church effort in Bolton.’²⁰⁹ The letter is perhaps a little unwisely directed, yet its unassuming request for gifts to sell seems to have stayed with Woolf and features in the second chapter of *Three Guineas*. Here, the honorary treasurer of a professional women’s society asks the narrator to make a subscription or, ‘Failing money [...] any gift—books, fruit or cast-off clothing that can be sold in a bazaar.’²¹⁰ Woolf suggests this quotation is taken from a letter received from the London and National Society for Women’s Service in 1938, but Black doubts whether ‘the phrases that the narrator presents in quotation marks in the text of *Three Guineas* are actual quotations at all.’²¹¹ This ‘rather surprising request for donations of clothes for resale to professional women’ is a fantasy based on more provincial appeals Woolf had previously received, such as the letter from Bolton’s united congregational churches.²¹² This fabrication allows Woolf’s narrator to ask in her text, ‘Why is she so poor, this representative of professional women, that she must beg for cast-off clothing for a bazaar?’²¹³ Of course the then current secretary of the L&NSWS, Pippa Strachey, was not so poor, but imagining this request to have come from impoverished professional women gave Woolf a motive to explore the disadvantaged financial position of educated, working women.

The other campaign letters included in Woolf’s second volume of cuttings come from more likely sources. The second letter, dated 19 February 1936, is from J. P. Strachey, principal of Newham College, Cambridge.²¹⁴ Pernal Strachey, sister of Pippa Strachey, asks Woolf if she would consent to become a member of a new ‘Committee of Patrons’ in support of the college’s appeal to raise £100,000 ‘to reconstruct out-of-date buildings and to provide additional accommodation.’²¹⁵ This request parallels the representative request of ‘one such treasurer’ in *Three Guineas*, who the narrator

²⁰⁹ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 2: 2.

²¹⁰ *TG*, 210.

²¹¹ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 83.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *TG*, 210–211.

²¹⁴ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 2: 7.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

describes as ‘asking for money with which to rebuild a women’s college.’²¹⁶ The college remains unspecified so that the appeal epitomizes the financial difficulties of all women’s educational institutions in Britain at the time. The third letter to appear, dated 12 August 1936, is a request for a signature of support from the British Committee of the International Peace Campaign (IPC) of which Viscount Cecil and Pierre Cot were jointly president.²¹⁷ At first glance this appeal from a peace society looks as if it might have suggested Woolf’s conception of her work as a ‘Letter to an Englishman’ on the prevention of war. However, the appeal was written by a woman, Dame Adelaide Livingstone, the British Committee’s vice-chairman, and is dated 18 March 1936, three months after Woolf had first proposed the format in her diary.²¹⁸

Another five letters are collected in the third notebook. These are (in order of appearance in the volume): a letter from Pippa Strachey, as secretary of the L&NSWS, asking members to campaign against ‘the differential income-limit proposed for men and women’ under the Widows’, Orphans’, and Old Age Contributory Pensions Bill (dated 19 June 1937);²¹⁹ an undated informational pamphlet from the IPC appealing for funds;²²⁰ an awareness-raising letter from Monica Whately, secretary of The Six Point Group (dated 7 June 1935) requiring support against the degradation of women in Nazi Germany;²²¹ a circular from the National Society for Equal Citizenship (dated February 1936) asking ‘for help financial and otherwise’;²²² and a notice from the British Section of the IAWDC about an upcoming meeting on 1 November 1937.²²³ Despite some links between several of these associations and those evoked in *Three Guineas*, Black has argued convincingly that none of the letters or writers collected in Woolf’s notebooks exactly match any of the three appeals to which her narrator responds.²²⁴ The majority of Woolf’s letters ask for endorsement not money, and none of them request a guinea. A guinea would be a restrictive, archaic and odd request to Woolf in the mid-1930s from the majority of these correspondents, many of whom were her acquaintances, and

²¹⁶ *TG*, 182.

²¹⁷ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 2: 29.

²¹⁸ *D* 5: 18.

²¹⁹ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 3: 23.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3: 24.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 3: 29-30.

²²² *Ibid.*, 3: 34.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 3: 51.

²²⁴ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 81-85.

to whom her celebrity name and support were worth far more than this relatively small amount of money. Woolf's plan for *Three Guineas* as an epistolary work prompted her gathering of this correspondence, rather than her receipt of these letters inspiring its form. Although receiving such appeals prompted Woolf's conception of this framework for her work, the letters, their writers, and the societies to which she responds in *Three Guineas* are not identifiable but generic composites based on her political associations and her research.

The three letters of *Three Guineas* function as a structural device rather than a historical record. The public letter was a common trope in 1930s pamphlet literature, employed by the Hogarth Press, for example, in their *Hogarth Letters* series issued between 1931 and 1933.²²⁵ Around the same period, during 1930-1932, Woolf experimented three times with the public letter format; in her preface to Margaret Llewelyn Davies in *Life As We Have Known It* (published 5 March 1931), in a signed review titled 'All About Books' (published in the *New Statesman & Nation* on 28 February 1931), and in her contribution to the *Hogarth Letters* series, *A Letter to a Young Poet* (published in 1932).²²⁶ The public letter belongs to the great eighteenth-century tradition of journalistic essayistic debate. This essay form imitates the framework of a paradoxically private document to address the public as a whole on an issue of collective concern. The title of Woolf's Hogarth Letter explicitly referenced the tradition into which she was writing through paralleling the title of Jonathan Swift's 'A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet,' published on 1 December 1720.²²⁷ Her use of the 'letter/essay' structure in these early 1930s works and in *Three Guineas* represents an extension of her earlier use of the 'lecture/essay' format in *A Room of One's Own*, (and in the first essay of *The Pargiters* and the *Second Common Reader* version of 'How Should One Read a Book?') in order to candidly state her opinion on a subject whilst drawing her readers into dialogue.²²⁸ 'Letters play a symbolic role in women's move

²²⁵ The Press published twelve 'Letters' on a range of political, literary and artistic subjects during 1930-1933, each printed as a small, card-backed pamphlet of approximately 30-40 pages. Woolf's contribution to the series will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

²²⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'Introductory Letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies,' in *Life As We Have Known It: By Co-operative Working Women*, ed. Margaret Llewelyn Davies (London: Virago, 1990), xvii-xxxix; Virginia Woolf, 'All About Books,' in *E 5*, 219-225; Virginia Woolf, *A Letter to a Young Poet* (London: Hogarth, 1932).

²²⁷ Jonathan Swift, 'A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet,' in *The Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Thomas Roscoe (London: Henry Bohn, 1848), 2: 295-300.

²²⁸ Virginia Woolf, 'How Should One Read a Book?' in *E 5*, 572-584.

from private to public,' Snaith observes; '[they] are of paramount importance for Woolf's feminist politics.'²²⁹ Woolf's use of the epistolary mode in *Three Guineas* determinedly shifts her feminist-pacifist cultural criticism into the public realm, giving her socio-political opinions public voice while also resisting didacticism by framing her answer on the subject of how men and women are to prevent war as only one response within a wider debate. As Black suggests, the lack of direct correspondence between the surviving campaign letters Woolf collected and those to which the narrator of *Three Guineas* replies should remind us that the letter writer of *Three Guineas* is 'a symbolic figure significant for the negative characteristics of the group she represents,' not Woolf herself.²³⁰ Both the 'letter/essay' format and her narrative stance as the middle-class daughter of an educated man are a rhetorical strategy designed through, not in response to, the letters in the scrapbooks.

Material in Woolf's third scrapbook was collected from mid- to late 1937. Many of her notes in this volume fed directly into the final stage of her writing of *Three Guineas*. A short passage from Elizabeth Haldane's *From One Century to Another* is collected; Woolf would later quote from this source four times in the notes for *Three Guineas* indicating a direct genetic link between the two.²³¹ A report on the bombardment of Almeria clipped from the *Daily Telegraph* and a booklet by French reporter Louis Delaprée on *The Martyrdom of Madrid*, both written in 1937, provide censored and 'inedited' accounts of the many civilians left homeless, dead or injured by the actions of Italy and Germany in the Spanish Civil War.²³² These sources inform Woolf's evocation of the Spanish Government's photographs of 'mutilated' bodies, 'dead children' and 'ruined houses' in the published version of *Three Guineas*.²³³ The description of these photographs enables Woolf to induce 'horror and disgust' in the mind of her readers while highlighting the usual censorship of such atrocities in the media, as emphasised by Delaprée in his pamphlet.²³⁴ Delaprée is also cited at length in

²²⁹ Snaith, 'Wide Circles,' 1.

²³⁰ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 82.

²³¹ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 3: 52; *TG*, 368, 371, 398, 408. Elizabeth Haldane, *From One Century to Another: The Reminiscences of E. S. Haldane* (London: Maclehouse & Co., 1937).

²³² 'First Full Account of Almeria Havoc! 8000 Rendered Homeless by German Bombardment,' an unidentified newspaper cutting dated 5 June 1937 and Louis Delaprée, *The Martyrdom of Madrid: Inedited Witnesses* (Madrid, 1937); both collected in Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 3: 9, 20.

²³³ *TG*, 165.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

the endnotes to substantiate Woolf's discussion of the seductive 'fighting instinct.'²³⁵ Later in the third scrapbook, Woolf copies out a number of lines from *Antigone*.²³⁶ References to Sophocles' play had appeared in earlier manuscript versions of *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, but these passages show that Woolf returned to the text again while compiling the notes for her polemic to gather quotations for her lengthy comparison between Creon and 'Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini.'²³⁷ Woolf's three reading scrapbooks provide a fascinating documentary history of the 1930s as well as numerous insights into her writing process and the development of her feminist-pacifist arguments in *The Years* and *Three Guineas*.

The Drafts

Although she did not begin writing it in earnest until 1937, Woolf's earliest version of *Three Guineas* is probably preserved in a miscellaneous notebook from 1935 (M.1.6). This document contains an eleven-page longhand draft titled 'Draft of Professions,' dated 14 April 1935. Black has put forward a strong case for these pages being Woolf's first effort 'to sketch a draft of On Being Despised, or whatever it is to be called,' at which she recorded making a 'rash attempt' in her diary on the same date.²³⁸ The 'Draft' begins with a return to the format of Woolf's speech to the Junior Council of the L&NSWS in 1931. If this text is an early draft of *Three Guineas* then it confirms an assumption of many previous critics; that when composing a separate pamphlet on the feminist topics suggested by her writing of *The Pargiters*, Woolf's first impulse was to use the earlier essay portions of that work. The awkward phrasing of the 'Draft' suggests that Woolf returned to this format from memory, however, without consulting her original speech or the first essay of her first version of *The Pargiters*. Her opening lines – 'In asking me to speak [...] [you] have done me a great honour. But what a strange position to find oneself in!' – function as crude shorthand for the more polished introduction present in the first *Pargiters* essay.²³⁹ 'Draft of Professions' is scrappy, haphazard, and written primarily to vent Woolf's desire to begin writing her feminist

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 402.

²³⁶ Woolf, *Three Guineas* scrapbooks, B.16f, 3: 62.

²³⁷ *TG*, 395.

²³⁸ *D* 4: 300; Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 63-64.

²³⁹ Virginia Woolf, MS fragment 'Draft of Professions,' in M.1.6, in *VW: MA*, 125.

pamphlet without the expectation that it would serve as a considered outline for that text. At no point in its history were the essay sections of *The Pargiters* ever directly transferred and recast as *Three Guineas*. This sketch was soon rendered redundant by later plans for the framework and argument of her polemic. Nevertheless the document records an interesting moment in this text's development, when Woolf considered women's need to gain equal access to the professions her central argument and had not yet stumbled on the idea of structuring her essay as a letter.

After two years of planning and numerous false starts, Woolf began writing *Three Guineas* in earnest in January 1937. Her plan on 28 January was 'to write it out now, without more palaver,' which she began and continued through to October, writing the chapters sequentially.²⁴⁰ A note in her diary on 28 February indicates that she was working on the first chapter: 'I again dropped my pen to think about my next paragraph—universities—how will that lead to professions and so on.'²⁴¹ On 2 March she was still 'absorbed [...] in the Un[iversit]y part of 3Gs.'²⁴² In the next two weeks Woolf presumably finished a draft of this chapter, as she recorded being 'too jaded to tackle the Professional chapter' that she planned to follow it on 17 March.²⁴³ Woolf's hope to have *Three Guineas* 'roughed in by Easter' proved unrealistic as she struggled to channel her thoughts into her planned form in the early months of 1937.²⁴⁴ Seven pages of holograph notes on women and war probably date from this period (catalogued as B.16c). The passages in this notebook predominately relate to the first chapter of *Three Guineas* as Woolf grapples with a definition for the class her narrator will 'call [...] the {sisters} <daughters> of educated men.'²⁴⁵ The draft also contains some sentiments that relate to later chapters of *Three Guineas*, including the famous declaration: 'I have no country to fight for.'²⁴⁶ However, the unstructured comments on women's lack of equal access to education and their consequential anti-patriotism contained in this notebook correspond more strongly with the key themes of Woolf's first chapter and support the dating of these pages to this time.

²⁴⁰ D 5: 52.

²⁴¹ D 5: 62.

²⁴² D 5: 64.

²⁴³ D 5: 69.

²⁴⁴ D 5: 52.

²⁴⁵ Virginia Woolf, MS notes on Women and War, B.16c, in *VW: MA*, 4.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

After two weeks holiday driving around Western France in May 1937, on 1 June Woolf declared ‘I have at last got going with 3 Guineas—after 5 days grind, re-copying & to some extent re-writing, my poor old brain hums again.’²⁴⁷ The reference to ‘re-copying & [...] re-writing’ before beginning the second chapter suggests that Woolf revised each section of *Three Guineas* ‘to some extent’ as she wrote it, rather than completing a full manuscript draft of the entire text before revising it in typescript as she had with *The Years*. A fragmentary typescript of this first chapter is collected in the folder catalogued as M.28 (which also contains the largest holograph draft fragment of the text although there is no reason to suppose the two belong together). Forty-one consecutive pages of typescript present a draft of the second half of the first chapter. Beginning with a description of the elaborate and symbolic clothing of the professions, Woolf’s narrator describes the processions of the sons of educated men from the perspective of their sisters. Her narrator moves on to answer the letter from the honorary treasurer of the building fund of a women’s university college. Much of this prose is incorporated into the published version of *Three Guineas*, although the ordering of the paragraphs was rearranged, further material added, and some removed. Her revisions are evidenced by a substantial number of manuscript deletions and additions on the typescript. Several of the miscellaneous typed pages that append this document also duplicate sections of this draft, evidencing Woolf’s sustained reworking of the most troubling paragraphs of her first chapter.

On 28 June 1937 Woolf declared herself to be ‘at work on the Second Guinea.’²⁴⁸ A surviving fifty-seven page typescript of ‘The Second Guinea’ is also dated 28 June, suggesting that she had already written a manuscript draft of her second chapter at this point and was now setting to work on preliminary revisions. In her diary Woolf described this stage of her writing as ‘a terrible lot of reasoning (for me) & fitting in of the right quotations.’²⁴⁹ A number of surviving manuscript documents appear to date from the spring and early summer of 1937, evidencing the evolution of this ‘very difficult chapter.’²⁵⁰ Reading Notebook LV (B.16a) is linked to this period by the declaration of ‘the end of the second guinea’ that concludes a section of *Three*

²⁴⁷ D 5: 90.

²⁴⁸ D 5:100.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Guineas drafted in this document.²⁵¹ The first two pages of this loose leaf folder consist of short draft fragments of *Three Guineas*, while the remaining twenty-five pages contain further research for Woolf's polemic including passages from *A Memoir of Anne Jemima Clough* and J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond's *The Age of the Chartists*.²⁵² The paragraphs read as a series of rough notes rather than coherent paragraphs which suggests that though they refer to the end of her chapter, they may have been written at a relatively early stage of its development. The draft sections presented in Reading Notebook LVII (B.16e), in contrast, are more assured. This covered spiral-bound notebook contains notes from Winifred Holtby's *Letters to a Friend* alongside four pages of draft argument relating to the second chapter of *Three Guineas*.²⁵³ In an extract titled 'The Professions,' Woolf asserts, 'we must make a different institution: "We" are the only people who can criticise; the wage-earners.'²⁵⁴ The next three pages discuss women's need for financial independence to make objective political judgements, and lament the relatively small number of women, as represented by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), in this position. 'The woman who dies worth 36 million, like Ellerman,' Woolf observes, 'has yet to be born.'²⁵⁵ The moneyed gentleman referred to here is Sir John Reeves Ellerman, shipowner and financier, who died suddenly in 1933 leaving an estate valued for probate at £36,685,000 to his twenty-three-year-old male heir.²⁵⁶ The comparison with Ellerman not only evokes his vast financial legacy, described by W. D. Rubinstein as 'perhaps the greatest business fortune ever made in British history,' but his rise up the social scale through professional enterprise, rising from the son of an immigrant German shipbroker to an English baronet, with relatively little schooling and without attending university.²⁵⁷ It might be unthinkable in the mid-1930s that any woman would die worth 36 million, Woolf's narrator admits, but the fact that the first man to

²⁵¹ Virginia Woolf, Reading Notebook LV, B.16a, in *VW: MA*, 2.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 3-10, 25-28. B. A. Clough, *A Memoir of Anne Jemima Clough* (London: Arnold, 1897) ; J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, *The Age of the Chartists, 1832-1854: A Study of Discontent* (London: Longman, 1930).

²⁵³ Virginia Woolf, Reading Notebook LVII, B.16e, in *VW: MA*, 2. Winifred Holtby, *Letters to a Friend*, ed. Alice Holtby and Jean McWilliam (London: Collins, 1937).

²⁵⁴ Woolf, Reading Notebook LVII, B.16e, 4.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵⁶ See W. D. Rubinstein, 'Ellerman, Sir John Reeves, first baronet (1862-1933),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Web site and database] (Oxford University Press, 2004); available from <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32995>>; accessed 5 January 2009.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

achieve this feat was a social climber and outsider suggests that perhaps one day it might be possible for a professional woman to do the same. Despite appearing chaotic, the notes in these two documents indicate that Woolf had a clear outline for *Three Guineas* in mind.

Alongside recording the difficulty of starting work on her second chapter on 28 June 1937, Woolf noted that she ‘was heartened by reading some of the first’ and saw the work ‘as 3 Chapters suddenly; & if I can drive my pen hard, might have it done by August.’²⁵⁸ On 11 July she described herself as ‘in full flood every morning with 3Gs.’²⁵⁹ The August deadline was soon rendered impossible, however, by the sudden death of Julian Bell in Spain on 18 July. Serving as a voluntary ambulance driver in the Spanish Civil War, he had been struck by a shell fragment. The Woolfs learned of their nephew’s death on 20 July. Woolf visited Vanessa daily in the weeks that followed, remarking on 6 August that though she had ‘3 Guineas to finish [...] the last chapter, now I suppose [is] stiff & cold.’²⁶⁰ Nevertheless, she determined to ‘try [it] tomorrow: then polish off Congreve [...] & so to Roger this autumn.’²⁶¹ Her acceptance of the task of writing Roger Fry’s authorised biography following his death in 1934 also hung over her head at this time. A third set of reading notes relating to this period and headed ‘Monday 2 August’ begin with draft passages for her essay on William Congreve (catalogued as B.16d).²⁶² Following these pages, the notebook contains a draft of several paragraphs relating to *Three Guineas* but rather than looking forward to the final chapter these paragraphs echo the first chapter, including, again, Mary Kingsley’s assertion that ‘Being allowed to learn German was all the paid for education I ever had.’²⁶³ This repetition evidences the production of *Three Guineas*’s confusing reverberative structure, while also perhaps reflecting Woolf’s difficulty resuming her project following Julian’s death in war-torn Spain. ‘We had both been certain he would be killed,’ Woolf wrote of herself and Vanessa to Vita Sackville-West on 26 July 1937; ‘But it was useless to argue. And his feelings were so mixed [...] interest in war, and

²⁵⁸ D 5: 100.

²⁵⁹ D 5: 101.

²⁶⁰ D 5: 105.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Virginia Woolf, MS notes on Congreve and *Three Guineas*, B.16d, in VW: MA, 1-7.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9.

conviction, and a longing to be in the thick of things.²⁶⁴ In the following months such questions focussed Woolf's staunchly anti-war position and her intricate pacifist arguments in her third chapter of *Three Guineas*, but directly after the event she was 'not clear enough in the head to feel anything but varieties of dull anger and despair.'²⁶⁵

Not until September 1937 did Woolf resume work properly on the third chapter of *Three Guineas*. The largest surviving manuscript draft of *Three Guineas* (contained in M.28) is dated '21st Sept.'²⁶⁶ The holograph is directed to Woolf's male correspondent, addressed as 'Sir.'²⁶⁷ The narrator begins by discussing with him the limited number of financially independent daughters of educated men who they might ask to help them 'protect culture; [and] intellectual liberty.'²⁶⁸ She concludes that 'if there were two hundred such women [...] that is as many as we can expect.'²⁶⁹ 'Consider how little we have to offer by way of reward' to these women, she reminds her reader, and how much 'more courage & indifference to blame & ridicule' such women would need 'than we have any right to require.'²⁷⁰ Woolf develops these ideas and her phrasing as she goes along, working them out gradually over six pages that show her writing and revising in one process. For example, on page 2 of her draft she urges her addressee to 'think [...] how much fifty or twenty or ten people, of either sex [...] would do, now, if they pledged themselves not to commit adultery of the brain'; on page 4 she returns to and revises this section of her argument, this time debating 'what could be done by a small {band} number – one hundred, fifty {or} even twenty people' to defend 'Disinterested culture.'²⁷¹ The draft contains numerous such amendments, starts, stops, and rewritings. Nonetheless, the overall ordering of the sections of her argument and much of the prose is very similar to the published version of Chapter 3. The opening pages of the printed chapter correspondingly discuss the limited number of 'Daughters of educated men who have enough to live upon,' asking whether there might be '1,000, 500, or even 250,' while questioning what 'is meant by [...] "disinterested"

²⁶⁴ L 6: 150-151.

²⁶⁵ L 6: 150.

²⁶⁶ Woolf, *Three Guineas*: fragments, M.28, 1.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2, 4.

culture.²⁷² By September 1937, Woolf had already puzzled out the most challenging aspects of her final chapter and was able to write her draft relatively fluently. Her diary records that she worked solidly on the *Three Guineas* from 27 September to 12 October, on the morning of which she wrote the last page.²⁷³

Aside from the material collected in the reading scrapbooks, there is little further evidence of Woolf's revisions in the last months of 1937 and early in 1938, or of her writing of the notes. During this period Woolf also compressed her three chapter work into two articles, titled 'Women Must Weep – Or Unite Against War,' to be published in America at the time of *Three Guineas*'s release.²⁷⁴ The Berg Collection holds a thirty-two page holograph draft fragment of this abridgement. While this abridgement represents a considerable act of revision, another final fragmentary pre-text relating to *Three Guineas* presents a text that differs substantially from anything else to be found in the dossier. Reading Notebook LVI (B.16b) consists of ten undated loose manuscript pages five of which contain notes for a drama titled 'The Burning of the Vote: A Comedy.'²⁷⁵ This sketch is roughed out through a list of phrases, whether bullet points or speech for the chorus is unclear. References to 'voices of Victorian mothers wailing, Joad & Wells,' appear alongside provocative questioning of the Christian Church's most well-known prayer: 'May the Lord make us truly thankful. But who is the Lord?'²⁷⁶ References to 'cheques for one guinea,' 'all moonshine,' 'leaving your letter unanswered,' 'the Spanish photographs,' and an addressee who wants 'a suggestion how to prevent war' indicate that Woolf had already identified her central pretexts for discussing the arguments of *Three Guineas* at the time of writing.²⁷⁷ The presence of these ideas dates the document to 1937, but it is not possible to identify more specifically when it was produced. This dramatic sketch was probably conceived as a possible occasional piece through which Woolf hoped to convey the opinions of *Three*

²⁷² *TG*, 289.

²⁷³ *D* 5: 112.

²⁷⁴ For an introduction to Woolf's abridgement of *Three Guineas* see Naomi Black, "'Women Must Weep': The Serialization of *Three Guineas*," in *Editing Virginia Woolf: Interpreting the Modernist Text*, ed. James M. Haule and J. H. Stape (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 74-90. Wisor also discusses the differences between the book-length and article versions in 'Versioning Virginia Woolf,' where she includes sample passages of a proposed parallel text edition of *Three Guineas* and 'Women Must Weep' (504-510).

²⁷⁵ Virginia Woolf, MS notes for 'The Burning of the Vote,' B.16b, in *VW: MA*, 3-8.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-8.

Guineas in a more immediate, comedic form, perhaps with a private audience of a specific women's society or personal acquaintances in mind. It is unlikely that 'The Burning of the Vote' was ever considered as an alternative to the printed pamphlet, but the existence of these notes again reminds us of the formal fluidity of Woolf's cultural criticism in the 1930s. Had she completed it, would Woolf have considered 'The Burning of the Vote' to be part of her larger work, existing also as *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, or would she have perceived it to be a new work entirely? The shift from a document-based to a performance-based text entirely changes the manner in which the reader/audience views and experiences a literary work, yet the key themes and aims of 'The Burning of the Vote' mirror those expressed in the '1910' section of *The Years* and explicated in *Three Guineas*. Woolf's recasting of her essay as 'The Burning of the Vote' may look like a drastic shift in literary direction but it might be perceived as merely a horizontal revision by Tanselle's definition as her dramatising of the work involves a process of selective cutting that parallels her abridging of the essay to create 'Women Must Weep.'

The existence of 'The Burning of the Vote' once more prompts us to question the nature of the revisionary processes that constitute the evolution of *Three Guineas* from Woolf's first conception of a sequel to *A Room of One's Own* in January 1931. This chronological organisation of the dossier of pre-publication materials associated with *Three Guineas* indicates clear links from her reading scrapbooks through *The Pargiters* and *The Years* to *Three Guineas*. Yet the non-fiction work Woolf published as *Three Guineas* in June 1938 is not 'the sexual life of women' she first intended to write and represents an entirely different work in style and structure to the predecessor she planned to model the text on. As her cultural criticism expanded in this decade, shifting focus in response to her reading and to the numerous social interactions and political events detailed in this chapter, Woolf looked for a new form to convey her feminist critique of patriarchy. The final section of this chapter will turn to the genesis of one of the most crucial intellectual shifts that drove this evolutionary process: the synthesis of Woolf's feminist analysis of gender politics with her pacifist sentiments. This expansion in Woolf's political thought entirely changed the character, outlook and argument of Woolf's planned sequel to *A Room of One's Own*.

The Evolution of Woolf's Feminist-Pacifist Viewpoint in the 1930s

Arguably the most significant development, or vertical leap, in the gestation of Woolf's late cultural criticism was the incorporation of pacifism into her feminist stance. Woolf repeatedly states in *Three Guineas* that it is the historically oppressed and disqualified position of women in British society that causes them to feel no sympathy with the patriotic aims of war. Her famous declaration that 'as a woman, I have no country [...]' [a]s a woman I want no country [...] [a]s a woman my country is the whole world' explicitly reinforces this link between economic, intellectual and social disadvantage, and anti-nationalism.²⁷⁸ Rather than arguing that women are biologically inclined to pacifism Woolf asserts that it is their oppressed social position that makes them inclined to oppose war. '[I]f you insist upon fighting to protect me, or "our" country,' she elucidates in the female persona of 'the outsider,' then 'let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share' and 'to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share.'²⁷⁹ Part of the controversy evoked by Woolf's position upon the publication of *Three Guineas* was that many who read it heard an inappropriate complaint; how could Woolf stand in a democratic country on the eve of war bemoaning the historical mistreatment of women? The following discussion will trace the history of Woolf's controversial fusion of her feminism with her pacifism through her writing of 'Professions for Women,' *The Pargiters*, *The Years* and *Three Guineas* in the 1930s.

The linking of feminism with pacifism itself of course was far from revolutionary. The essentialist gender roles in which British patriarchal society was grounded had long propagated the idea that women, as nurturers, were biologically more inclined to object to war than men, to whom war was an extension of their duty, as the stronger sex, to protect and defend the women and children of their society. The representation of England as a damsel in distress in World War I propaganda posters and literature, whose survival would be compromised should 'her manhood fail / To stand by [her] in her deadly need,' played on such gender stereotypes to question the masculinity of those who were unwilling to enlist and, after the Military Service Act of

²⁷⁸ *TG*, 313.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

January 1916, to stigmatise as effeminate those who refused to be conscripted.²⁸⁰ The enthusiastic role taken by many women's suffrage campaigners in the war effort, in contrast, successfully destabilised this socially constructed gender binary.²⁸¹ Connections between feminism and pacifism in this period were often contradictory and now appear rather odd in the light of second-wave feminism. Richard J. Evans identifies the paradoxical pacifist stand-point of many feminists engaged in the suffragette campaign.²⁸² Pacifist-feminists 'shed[] their reluctance to fight for the vote' and engaged in militancy, while arguing that once the vote was granted them 'the creation of a female electorate would bring about a range of social and political reforms, stemming from women's interest in a more just and humane society,' and ensure 'the reversal of the arms race and the guarantee of peace.'²⁸³

Woolf's own involvement in the suffrage campaign prior to World War I was limited to administrative work. As a life-long pacifist and feminist, many of whose male friends were conscientious-objectors, Woolf was somewhat bewildered when it became clear that it was women's participation in the events of war that would finally admit them to the electorate.²⁸⁴ In January 1916 she wrote to Margaret Llewelyn Davies of her disordered feelings in response to the continuing war:

I become steadily more feminist, owing to the Times, which I read at breakfast and wonder how this preposterous masculine fiction keeps going a day longer—without some vigorous young woman pulling us together and marching through it—Do you see any sense in it? [...] And now they'll give us votes; and you say—what do you say Miss Ll.D? I wish I could borrow your mind about 3 days a week.²⁸⁵

Woolf's desire for 'some vigorous young woman to pull[] us together' against war reveals her belief that women's entry to the political arena would enable them to act as an active and effective balance to male governance. Woolf judges the war, and by extension the political institutions which direct it to be distinctly masculine and, for this

²⁸⁰ Quotation taken from Owen Seaman's poem 'To the Shirker: A Last Appeal,' published in *Punch* on 11 November 1914; quoted in *Minds at War: The Poetry and Experience of the First World War*, ed. David Roberts (Burgess Hill: Saxon Books, 1998), 197.

²⁸¹ See Arthur Marwick, *Women at War: 1914-1918* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977).

²⁸² See Richard J. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism, and Pacifism in Europe, 1870-1945* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 122.

²⁸⁴ See *L* 2: 76.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

reason, it is a young woman rather than a young man that she imagines will point out its absurdities to the male governing classes. As Briggs notes, '[t]he link between feminism and pacifism was not a new one for Woolf, nor for other feminists of her generation' but the position she suggested in *Three Guineas* was unusual and provoked resistance.²⁸⁶ While some welcomed her feminist critique of the implicit value assigned to patriotic greed and violence in British patriarchal culture, others were at a loss to recognise this fundamentally pacifist argument within Woolf's provocative gender analysis.

'Feminism is responsible for the worst of her books,' E. M. Forster declared of 'the cantankerous *Three Guineas*' in the Rede Lecture at Cambridge in 1941.²⁸⁷ Even friends within Woolf's intellectual circle were unable to grasp the pacifist position she presented in this text. Inhibited somewhat by age and gender, as he owns, Forster's violent adverse reaction towards Woolf's feminism renders him incapable of recognising her analysis in *Three Guineas* as political, even as he delivers a remarkably astute if satirical summary of it:

She was convinced that society is man-made, that the chief occupations of men are the shedding of blood, the making of money, the giving of orders, and the wearing of uniforms, and that none of these occupations is admirable. Women dress up for fun or prettiness, men for pomposity, and she had no mercy on the judge in his wig, the general in his bits and bobs of ribbon, the bishop in his robes, or even on the harmless don in his gown. She felt that all these mummers were putting something across over which women had never been consulted, and which she at any rate disliked. She declined to co-operate, in theory, and sometimes in fact. She refused to sit on committees or to sign appeals, on the ground that women must not condone this tragic male-made mess, or accept the crumbs of power which men throw them occasionally from their hideous feast. Like Lysistrata, she withdrew.²⁸⁸

Forster not only dismisses but entirely overlooks Woolf's pacifist anti-fascism; a remarkable oversight considering Forster's refusal to fight in World War I. His complete failure to note her anti-war stance, despite his otherwise perceptive synopsis of her opinions, indicates how challenging the position Woolf advocated remained in the 1930s. Her insistence on the relevance of feminism to the anti-war campaign was

²⁸⁶ Briggs, *Woolf: An Inner Life*, 315.

²⁸⁷ E. M. Forster, *Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), 23.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

incomprehensible to many of her contemporaries. Yet feminism and anti-fascism were entirely entwined in Woolf's mind by this time. The link between the two can be seen developing from Woolf's original 'Professions for Women' speech and her draft of '1910' for *The Years*, long before her public defence of her feminist-pacifism in *Three Guineas*.

With hindsight, the major arguments against patriarchy expressed in *Three Guineas* can be viewed as having evolved from a handful of apparently offhand comments on the root of 'the Angel in the House' in the speech Woolf delivered to the Junior Council of the L&NSWS.²⁸⁹ In the typescript of that talk, Woolf describes the 'Angel in the house' as 'a dream, a phantom — a kind of mirage like the pools and the palm trees which nature places in the desert to lure the caravan across.'²⁹⁰ She is 'the ideal of womanhood created by the imaginations of men and women at a certain stage of their pilgrimage to lure them across a very dusty stretch <of the journey>'.²⁹¹ Woolf's analysis of why this 'ideal of womanhood' was required is limited to a reference to 'reasons I cannot now go into — they have to do with the British Empire, our colonies, Queen Victoria, Lord Tennyson, the growth of the middle class and so on,' but these factors became the starting-point for her later exploration of the inhibited social relations between men and women.²⁹²

In *The Pargiters*, Woolf begins to explore the nineteenth-century model of ideal womanhood through illustration in the fictional chapters and through discursive argument in the essay portions of this text. At times her analysis develops a point from the earlier speech. Alfred Tennyson, for example, receives a mention in the fifth essay of *The Pargiters*. In the speech Woolf included a quotation from 'Lord Tennyson' to demonstrate generally how 'men [...] in the age of Victoria' cherished the idea of the ideal woman as a persona with an allure so strong 'all male minds perforce / Swayed to her from their orbits as they moved.'²⁹³ In *The Pargiters*, she evokes Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall' as evidence that he 'held that women's passions were intrinsically

²⁸⁹ Woolf, 'Professions for Women' typescript, M.70, 4.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

weaker than those of his own sex.’²⁹⁴ She contrasts this opinion with that of Montaigne writing three hundred years before Tennyson (although Woolf mistakenly has him writing ‘about 1400’), that ‘the passion of a woman was by nature stronger than that of a man; but was repressed, very painfully, by the rigours of convention.’²⁹⁵ Adopting a sociological approach, Woolf contends that since ‘the rigours of convention which Montaigne had noted had been [going] on for almost five hundred years—almost as long as the Oxford Colleges had been in existence, [they] may have produced its effect.’²⁹⁶ Referring back to the previous fictional episode as if it provided a factual example, Woolf details how ‘Kitty, who was 21 in 1880, therefore inherited the effects of an education which, if we attribute any importance to education, was bound not merely to teach a certain code of behaviour, but also to modify the passion itself.’²⁹⁷ Woolf’s discussion of the ‘angel in the house’ has been expanded from a description of ‘the ideal of womanhood’ in her original speech to an analysis of its part not only in shaping the social behaviour of nineteenth-century women, but also in moulding their internal reactions to the world around them.²⁹⁸

When Woolf dropped the ‘interchapters’ to concentrate on the fictional portions of her text she began to move away from her aim of confronting women’s repressed sexuality. Leaska argues persuasively that this change took place because Woolf realised that ‘if she was going to describe on paper the restrictive taboos and inhibitions to which her own generation of women were conditioned, the very act of daring to write them out would, on the contrary, disprove the existence not only of the taboos themselves but also of the inhibition in describing them.’²⁹⁹ Woolf consequently shifted her focus, turning to narrative to present these taboos and inhibitions through depicting the distinct gender roles conformed to by men and women in patriarchal society through her fictional episodes. Despite this departure from the objectives inspired by her original speech, the image of British society as a ‘caravan’ crossing the nineteenth-century desert that featured in this talk would return in Woolf’s extended investigations of patriarchy, first in drafts of the ‘1910’ section of *The Years*, and then in *Three*

²⁹⁴ *TP*, 110.

²⁹⁵ *TP*, 109-110.

²⁹⁶ *TP*, 110.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’ typescript, M.70, 5.

²⁹⁹ Leaska, introduction to *TP*, xviii.

Guineas. At the typescript stage, Woolf even adopted ‘The Caravan’ as a working-title for her novel.³⁰⁰ The repeated presence of this motif alongside Woolf’s comments on patriarchy in the ‘1910’ section of *The Years* indicates that this text was in some ways also a draft version of *Three Guineas*. Yet the image of a lone female character imagining herself as part of a ‘caravan crossing the desert’ first appeared in *The Voyage Out*, once more reminding us that Woolf’s critiques of patriarchy and the motifs through which they are expressed in her 1930s texts evolved out of her earlier oeuvre.³⁰¹

The ‘1910’ section in the published version of *The Years* is approximately fifty pages long and tells the story of one day, Friday 6 May 1910, from the perspective of a selection of members of the Pargiter family. Like all the chapters in the book, the chapter is divided into sections with breaks between scenes. The opening ‘prelude’ evokes ‘an English spring day’ where ‘[i]n the country it was an ordinary day enough.’³⁰² ‘In London, however,’ the narrator sketches a picture of ‘the stricture and pressure of the season [...] where flags flew; canes tapped; dresses flowed’ and the ‘Parks [...] were making ready [...] as if waiting for something to happen; for a curtain to rise; for Queen Alexandra to come.’³⁰³ From this anticipation of pomp and ceremony in the West End, the first scene shifts to Rose travelling across London, past the Houses of Parliament, to visit her cousins Maggie and Sara in their ‘shabby street on the south side of the river.’³⁰⁴ Andrew Thacker notes Woolf’s ‘keen eye for the social geography’ of southeast London, a region also represented in *Orlando* and *A Room of One’s Own*.³⁰⁵ Maggie and Sara’s outsider status is emphasised immediately by their residence in this poorer, less fashionable district, and by their location on the opposite side of the river to Westminster, the seat of political power.

³⁰⁰ On 11 January 1935 Woolf wrote ‘I shall reduce “The Caravan” (so called suddenly) to 15,000: & shall finish retyping in May’; see *D* 4: 273-274.

³⁰¹ Leaving England, Rachel Vinrace notes that ‘people in ships’ view England as ‘a very small island [...] a shrinking island,’ while she feels herself to be ‘an inhabitant of the great world [...] more lonely than the caravan crossing the desert’; see *VO*, 29-30. No explicit critique of patriarchy occurs in this passage, but the images of the caravan and of England as a shrinking island are startlingly evocative of *The Years* and *Between the Acts*.

³⁰² *Y*, 153.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Y*, 155.

³⁰⁵ Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 177.

In the second scene, we meet Sara and Maggie in their flat in south London, apprehensively preparing for Rose to join them for lunch. A third, longer scene depicts Rose, Maggie and Sara reminiscing about Abercorn Terrace as they eat. Rose leaves to go to an unspecified 'meeting' and is joined by Sara while Maggie stays behind to continue sewing a dress.³⁰⁶ Their journey is represented by a short interjectory paragraph described from the point-of-view of 'an elderly man, battered and red-nosed [...] selling violets' in 'the alley that led into the old square off Holborn.'³⁰⁷ The violet-seller encounters 'two ladies,' who playfully act out a leave-taking scene in front of him, in which 'the tall lady' takes 'a bunch of violets from the tray [...] though she hadn't paid for them.'³⁰⁸ Although the women are not named as Rose and Sara, when they arrive at the meeting in the following paragraph Sara 'brandish[es] her bunch of violets in Rose's face.'³⁰⁹ In a similar manner to her narrative technique in *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf transfers between the minds of her characters in this section by describing their different internal reactions to external objects or events.

The fourth major scene of '1910,' the meeting, is described from the perspective of Eleanor, whose interior monologue never reveals the subject of debate though we may suppose it is women's suffrage. At the close of the meeting Eleanor accepts a lift from Kitty. Their journey forms the fifth scene of the chapter before we accompany Kitty to the Opera House after Eleanor has left the car. The sixth scene focuses on a performance of *Siegfried*, at which Kitty sees her cousin Edward and another 'boy, a cousin of her husband's,' who furtively inform her that '[t]he doctors have given him up' as they both look up to the empty royal box.³¹⁰ As the opera unfolds, Kitty contemplates the achievements and events of her life and determines that she was right not to marry Edward. The sound of hammering on stage brings to mind, though she does not recognise the memory exactly, the sound of Nelly Robson's brother mending the hen coop in 1880 and the feeling that 'she had wanted him to kiss her.'³¹¹ A recollection of 'the farm hand up at Carter's' similarly reminds Kitty that '[t]hat's the sort of life I like,' and she feels 'a pang of envy' towards a young man 'shouting

³⁰⁶ Y, 164.

³⁰⁷ Y, 166.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ Y, 167.

³¹⁰ Y, 174.

³¹¹ Y, 175.

‘Bravo! Bravo!’ as the opera ends and she declares it time for ‘dinner.’³¹² Back at Maggie and Sara’s flat in Hyams Place, we join them for the final scene as ‘they ha[ve] finished dinner.’³¹³ The sisters’ evening conversation includes a disjointed account of Sara’s afternoon with Rose while Maggie finishes sewing her dress. The chapter closes with the sound of ‘a voice [...] crying hoarsely’ in the street, and the final declaration that ‘The King’s dead!’³¹⁴

Eric Warner contends that this allusion to the death of Edward VII ‘barely disturb[s] the placid narrative surface of the novel’ and that the omission of sustained reference to this political event indicates Woolf’s ‘reluctance to deal with hard, “historical” fact.’³¹⁵ Yet in an early rough outline of the book, Woolf referred to this section of the novel as ‘the long day that ends with the King’s death,’ highlighting the importance of this event to her choice of date.³¹⁶ The other events of this chapter show that Woolf fully researched the ‘historical’ facts behind her novel even if she did not choose to keep to them accurately. The 6 May 1910 was indeed a Friday as Woolf notes here and *Siegfried* was playing that evening at the Covent Garden Opera House. The King was never expected to attend, however, as Woolf must surely have known if she had found her details in contemporary newspapers, because his sudden illness the previous day had been widely reported. The King had failed to meet Queen Alexandra at Victoria Station as she returned from a trip abroad on the 5 May due to the abrupt onset of bronchitis. Woolf curiously never mentions the exact date in the published form of the novel, even though it appeared in the manuscript versions and she had evidently checked it thoroughly. This omission suggests her deliberate blurring of the timeframe. Her depiction of London poised ‘as if waiting [...] for Queen Alexandra to come’ at the beginning of the chapter interestingly corresponds to the anticipation of the Queen’s arrival and the King’s public appearance in the London papers the evening of the 4 May.³¹⁷ By compressing the events of the two following days into one, Woolf effectively accelerates the sense of disorientation felt by the reader as well as the characters at the sudden death of the king. The obscurity of her reference to Edward

³¹² Y, 175, 177.

³¹³ Y, 177.

³¹⁴ Y, 182.

³¹⁵ Warner, ‘Re-considering *The Years*,’ 26.

³¹⁶ D 4: 266-267.

³¹⁷ Y, 153.

VII maintains her focus on the novel's characters, while creating an atmosphere of the loss and impending chaos surrounding them. The death of Edward VII hangs significantly on the last page of this section, marking the end of authoritative patriarchy in the novel and, combined with Rose and Sara's attendance at the campaign meeting, foreshadowing a new age of protest and shifting relations between the classes and the sexes in British society.

Woolf's representation of 1910 evidently reflects her famous assertion in 'Character in Fiction' that it was 'on or about' this year that '[a]ll human relations [...] shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children.'³¹⁸ Margaret Comstock recognises 'the despair Maggie and Sara feel about human character in "1910,"' as '[p]robably the bleakest "sneer" in the novel' towards the current British socio-political system.³¹⁹ The inability of Maggie and Sara to explain their feminist position clearly to Rose, or for Rose to talk about her past, demonstrates to Patricia Cramer that 'patriarchal socialization has made them afraid to speak openly.'³²⁰ Cramer reads the '1910' chapter as an exploration of 'the barriers to women's bonding,' which, she argues, Woolf felt that women must conquer to 'work together against male supremacy.'³²¹ Susan M. Squier reaches a different interpretation of this chapter through reading it alongside two typescript fragments of the after-dinner discussion between Sara and Maggie. 'Dialogue and mock debate delineate the differences in position between Elvira, Maggie, and Rose' in these earlier drafts of the scene, Squier asserts, reading their discussion as an echo of debates raging amongst feminists within the Women's Social and Political Union in the spring and summer of 1910 as the WSPU 'revised its methods in fighting for women's rights, moving from militance to pacifism in hope of achieving parliamentary support for the Conciliation Bill' to extend votes to women.³²² Squier argues that these eight typescript pages are 'concerned less with the general relation between women and patriarchal society than with specific tactical disagreements within the women's movement.'³²³ Tracing the

³¹⁸ Virginia Woolf, 'Character in Fiction,' in *E* 3, 421-422.

³¹⁹ Margaret Comstock, 'The Loudspeaker and the Human Voice: Politics and the Form of *The Years*,' *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80: 2 (1977): 259.

³²⁰ Patricia Cramer, "'Loving in the War Years": The War of Images in *The Years*,' in *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*, ed. Mark Hussey (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 211.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² Squier, 'A Track of Our Own,' 205-206.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 210.

genesis of this scene back even further to the holograph draft of '1910,' the sneer on patriarchy Comstock recognises in the published chapter can be found here alongside the feminist debate Squier identifies in the typescript drafts. Woolf reworked this debate extensively at manuscript stage as she used this chapter to explore her own contrary opinions about how women might respond to and ultimately enter into patriarchal society through the dialogue of Rose, Maggie and Sara.

The '1910' chapter, written between 22 June and 30 July 1933, is double the length of the published text in the holograph draft, spanning seventy-five pages in the fourth notebook of Woolf's original eight-volume manuscript. The after-dinner scene at the end of the chapter, compacted to five pages in the printed text, fills thirty-four pages of the manuscript as Maggie and Elvira discuss their sense of exclusion from English society. Woolf experiments here with many of the political opinions that she will express as her own in *Three Guineas* through the persona of Elvira.³²⁴ This section of manuscript contains much frantic rewriting and crossing-out, presumably reflecting both Woolf's energy and difficulties while writing it. The focus of the scene in the manuscript version, as in the typescript fragments, is a letter that Elvira drafts to Rose explaining that she and Maggie would rather reject the vote and maintain their role as outsiders than participate in the current oppressive and propagandising systems of male government. 'Here we are [...] Magdalena, Elvira Pargiter,' Elvira writes to Rose in the manuscript draft, '& [...] considering the matter, with the aid {of Whittakers [*sic*],} we conclude, that though we thank you, for the offer [...] to become Englishwomen [...] the disadvantages & indeed dangers of this <position> {proceeding},—far outweigh the benefits.'³²⁵ She continues:

In our opinion the acceptance of a vote makes us liable to honours we deplore, & to services which we abominate—meaning by that {degrees,} titles <degrees> & shooting savages with muskets. Moreover [...] it would be <surely,> incumbent on us [...] to accept the {teaching} [...] of the Church of England [...] which we are not prepared to do.³²⁶

³²⁴ Squier notes the affinity between Elvira and Woolf in the typescript in 'A Track of Our Own,' 205-206. She argues that the politics of Vanessa Bell and Ethel Smyth are also represented here through the characters of Maggie and Rose respectively (205).

³²⁵ Woolf, *The Pargiters* MS, M.42, 4: 63.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4: 64.

Woolf revises the phrasing of Elvira's justification for refusing the vote repeatedly over several pages, each time evoking her aversion to the exclusivity of the education system and the professions, her abhorrence of militarism and empire, and her inability to follow the teachings of the Church. After this outburst, Elvira strains to bring her letter to a close. Maggie suggests she should 'hope Uncle Abels [*sic*] gout is better; & send him our best love.'³²⁷ This reversion back to etiquette-bound trivialities prompts Elvira to exclaim, '● | God knows, Maggie, its [*sic*] a complicated business [...] the moment I put my pen to the paper, & say [...] we hope Uncle Abels [*sic*] gout is better | ●.'³²⁸ Her struggle to find an appropriate tone with which to address Rose having explained her rejection of the vote parallels Woolf's difficulty in using 'polite journalese' to refuse the honorary degree she was offered from Manchester University in 1933, and foreshadows her attempts to combine courtesy and civility in her narrator's response to her male correspondent in *Three Guineas*.³²⁹

In writing this fictional text, Woolf is already tussling with the prose style she will later develop for *Three Guineas* to expound the political opinions suggested by the process of writing this novel. As Elvira adopts the tone of the subordinate, caring female in her letter, she '● | {at once} see[s] [her]self taking part in the procession, through the desert, with nothing but a clump of trees on the horizon; & the spears of savages; & hyena howling | ●.'³³⁰ Woolf returns to the image of the caravan in the desert at this point as a representation of the journey of the Pargiter family through history. '● | {What [...] right have we} to break off from the procession; – from one end of time to the other,' Elvira asks Maggie, as she imagines this procession 'com[ing] to the rock' at which 'we Magdalena & Elvira Pargiter stop & say to the Pargiters, Here we {take our} break off. Here we {make our own line through the desert,} leave you | ●.'³³¹ Woolf's use of the word 'procession' rather than 'caravan' in this representation of nineteenth-century patriarchal society as a convoy through the desert brings new connotations to the image first evoked in the typescript of her 'Professions for Women' speech. As Squier notes in her reading of the typescript drafts of this episode, 'Maggie and Elvira Pargiter play on the word "procession," formerly royal and

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4: 66.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *D* 4: 148.

³³⁰ Woolf, *The Pargiters* MS, M.42, 4: 66.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

patriarchal, now practised by the suffragists in huge marches.’³³² Yet within the wider context of the manuscript draft of this chapter, Maggie and Sara’s decision to ‘break off’ from this nineteenth-century procession with its imperialist values represents resistance both to this patriarchal tradition and to the WSPU marches of 1910. The anti-suffrage sentiment and outsider position expressed elsewhere in this section evoke Woolf’s later suggestion in ‘The Burning of the Vote’ that her audience should ‘not raise movements [...] [or] praise famous women.’³³³ In calling for women to ‘make [their] own line through the desert,’ Elvira specifically rejects the vote and Britain’s patriarchal socio-political systems, with which she fears she and her sister would be compelled to engage if they entered the current political sphere as enfranchised ‘Englishwomen.’³³⁴

The manuscript draft of ‘1910’ becomes increasingly incoherent as Woolf attempts to develop her metaphor of the rock as the significant moment at which the middle-class daughters of educated men determine to assert their independence from the patriarchal family. Woolf continued to play with this motif in typescript versions of the chapter. Two of the three surviving typescript fragments of *The Years* relate to the ‘1910’ section of the manuscript. Both are undated, but Radin has suggested they may have been written in the period between the completion of the holograph notebooks in November 1934 and before the first galley proofs were pulled in March 1936.³³⁵ Woolf records revising her manuscript during this time in her diary and letters, but no documents survive which can be positively dated to this period. The three-page fragment (B.15.2) and the five-page fragment (B.4d), both transcribed and published by Squier in her article, are close to the manuscript in content and refer to ‘Elvira’ rather than ‘Sara,’ indicating they were produced before 30 December 1934 when Woolf first used the new name in her diary.³³⁶ In the five-page typescript, Woolf fleshes out her earlier sketch of the Pargiter procession reaching a rock, adding enthusiasm to Elvira’s imaginings of revolt:

‘We hope Uncle Abels [*sic*] gout is better’ she began, an[d]

³³² Squier, ‘A Track of Our Own,’ 206.

³³³ Woolf, ‘The Burning of the Vote,’ B.16b, 4.

³³⁴ Woolf, *The Pargiters* MS, M.42, 4: 66.

³³⁵ Radin, *The Evolution of a Novel*, 112.

³³⁶ D 4: 266-267.

"It's a tremendously exciting affair, Maggie. <She broke off>
Here we are, following the procession through the
desert, with nothing but a camp of trees on the
horizon, and the spears of savages and hyenas
howling; and now we are come to this rock; this
formidable and craggy [...] mountain; and {we}
rubbing our eyes and taking a look round, we
 <wave our swords in>
wave our hands to the assembled company, blow them
<the air> a kiss and make off on {a track of our own}.³³⁷

By the first proof stage in March 1936, Woolf had axed the letter to Rose from the after-dinner section of '1910.' The idea of the Pargiter family as a procession was transferred to the lunch section of '1910' in which Rose visits Sara and Maggie. As Rose sits with Sara and Maggie in their flat, Sara takes 'a fork in her hand, [...] dr[aws] a line on the table-cloth,' and declares it to be:

‘The Pargiters [...] going on and on and on’—here her fork touched a salt-cellar—‘until they came to a rock,’ she said; ‘and then Rose’—she looked at her again: Rose drew herself up slightly, ‘—Rose claps spurs to her horse, rides straight up to a man in a gold coat, and says “Damn your eyes!” Isn’t that Rose, Maggie?’ she said, looking at her sister as if she had been drawing her picture on the table-cloth.³³⁸

³³⁷ Virginia Woolf, *The Years* typescript fragment, B.4d, in VW: MA, 2.

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the image in the published text through portraying Rose rather than Sara or Maggie as the female character who breaks away from the procession of Pargiters. Rose is a suffragette.³³⁹ Here her hostility to ‘a man in a gold coat’ contributes to our sense that she is a feminist outsider; Rose is placed in opposition to his authoritative role, designated by his luxurious clothing, to which she responds with a military demeanour, ‘clap[ping] spurs to her horse’ and ‘rid[ing] straight up’ to him.³⁴⁰ Her militarism presents a far less radical response to patriarchy than Sara and Maggie’s indifferent outsider role in the manuscript version of this chapter. Rose’s involvement in the suffrage campaign is less revolutionary than Elvira and Maggie’s rejection of the vote and active refusal to participate in Britain’s oppressive socio-political institutions. Any debate of these two contrary feminist positions is suppressed in *The Years*, however, by the removal of Sara’s letter to Rose; a letter that, in retrospect, anticipates Woolf’s use of the letter form to set out her feminist-pacifist stance in *Three Guineas*. These revisions remove the most controversial aspect of Woolf’s feminist-pacifist argument against patriarchy from the published novel. By changing the character who encounters the rock and revolts against the Pargiter procession Woolf withholds her discussion of the political power of ‘indifference,’ reserving explicit investigation into this anti-patriotic and pacifist position for her later feminist pamphlet.

In the second chapter of *Three Guineas*, echoing Elvira’s letter to Rose in the *Pargiters* manuscript, Woolf’s narrator draws a picture of ‘the procession of educated men’ in her letter to the treasurer of the women’s professional society and asks her female reader how the daughters of educated men are to relate to it.³⁴¹ ‘There they go, our brothers,’ Woolf imagines, ‘mounting those steps [...] ascending those pulpits, preaching, teaching, administering justice. [...] It is a solemn sight always—a procession, like a caravanserai crossing a desert.’³⁴² She once more evokes the caravan trope to describe the progression of patriarchal British society and to consider how women, now equally responsible for this society, are to conform to or break away from this society’s values, institutions and customs. ‘[F]or the past twenty years or so,’ she asserts, ‘it is no longer a sight merely [...] [f]or there, trapesing along at the tail end of

³³⁹ Rose’s active involvement in the suffragette campaign is made explicit in the novel by a reference in the ‘1911’ chapter to her having ‘been had up in a police-court’ for throwing a brick; *Y*, 194.

³⁴⁰ *Y*, 161.

³⁴¹ *TG*, 243.

³⁴² *TG*, 240-241.

the procession, we go ourselves.’³⁴³ In *Three Guineas*, Woolf asks her female readers, ‘On what terms shall we join that procession?’³⁴⁴ She equates individual greed with the greed of nations, arguing that she will only give a guinea to the female treasurer ‘if she can satisfy us that our guinea shall be spent in the cause of peace.’³⁴⁵ The narrator finally determines that if women are to join the professions, which they must in order to obtain the financial independence to think for themselves, then they must retain ‘freedom from unreal loyalties.’³⁴⁶ In the third chapter of *Three Guineas* Woolf imagines indifference to such loyalties as an effective political tool through which, if women ‘bind [themselves] to take no share in patriotic demonstrations; to assent to no form of national self-praise’ and refrain from restricting others from access to the privileges they have recently gained, then ‘the daughters of educated men would help materially to prevent war.’³⁴⁷ ‘For psychology would seem to show that it is far harder for human beings to take action when other people are indifferent,’ Woolf argues, ‘than when their actions are made the centre of excited emotion.’³⁴⁸ She therefore advocates indifference as ‘the duty to which outsiders [should] train themselves in peace before the threat of death inevitably makes reason powerless.’³⁴⁹

Lili Hsieh has noted Woolf’s use of ‘a politics of affect’ in *Three Guineas*, ‘which is based, paradoxically, on indifference.’³⁵⁰ Woolf adopts indifference as a method of ‘approach[ing] a bracketed truth in a way that is not conciliatory nor combatant or partisan,’ Hsieh argues, but that ‘demands a non-partisan, *disinterested*, yet engaged and *interested*, readership.’³⁵¹ ‘From Rebecca West to Adrienne Rich,’ she argues, ‘the presumption that anger implicates actions of positive political results is hardly questioned’ and notes that this is ‘a tendency which is continued in the otherwise powerful readings of Woolf by Jane Marcus and Alex Zwerdling.’³⁵² In *Three Guineas*, Woolf works hard to develop a tone which avoids anger and yet might still prompt

³⁴³ *TG*, 241.

³⁴⁴ *TG*, 243.

³⁴⁵ *TG*, 238.

³⁴⁶ *TG*, 271.

³⁴⁷ *TG*, 314.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ Lili Hsieh, ‘The Other Side of the Picture: The Politics of Affect in Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas*,’ *Journal of Narrative Theory* 36: 1 (2006): 29.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, (emphasis in original).

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 24.

positive political action. As Hsieh notes, indifference is not only described as a political tool in Woolf's polemic but is also practised by her narrator as a method of presenting her arguments without angering or alienating her reader. Mirroring Elvira's attempt to remain polite towards Rose while trouncing her political opinions in '1910,' in *Three Guineas* Woolf attempts to alert her readers to their positive support for war-making without appearing accusatory, and to describe the inequalities between the genders without apportioning blame. Her concern to develop a courteous tone with which to prompt a receptive reading of her cultural criticism from male and female readers is evidenced by stylistic revisions in the draft of the essay.

In the holograph draft of the third chapter of *Three Guineas* Woolf focuses on her male correspondent's request for a guinea. She plays around with the pitch of her address, informing her addressee in a tone of feigned solemnity: 'You too it seems are a supplicant, an honorary Treasurer, asking for money to further the aims of his society. [...] Thus it might be preferable, as {was found} in the other two cases, of Honorary Treasurers asking for finances, to bargain & impose terms.'³⁵³ After some discussion of her supplicant's objectives – 'to defy tyranny, dictatorship, slavery' – she drops her exaggerated manner and declares frankly 'If those are your aims [...] then there is no further need of bargaining between us. Let {us} <me> make this quite plain. The guinea is yours [...] without any return on your part.'³⁵⁴ This switch from stylised to simple rhetoric has the effect of suggesting that the narrator's previous suspicion of her correspondent's values was merely a tongue-in-cheek performance and that she was quite sure of their united position throughout. The deletion of 'us' in favour of 'me' further supports Woolf's portrayal of her narrator's plain speaking here and emphasises the impression of a shared understanding between her and her reader. In fact, of course, the narrator's tone of sincerity is as much an act on Woolf's part as her first tone of scepticism, yet critics of *Three Guineas* 'often read ... Woolf's personal emotions as contents' as Hsieh observes.³⁵⁵ Woolf uses such narrative shifts in register, in this draft and throughout the printed text of *Three Guineas*, as a means to disguise her emotions so that she can question the political beliefs and social behaviour of her readers without appearing aggressive. The choice of a male peace activist for Woolf's primary fictional

³⁵³ Woolf, *Three Guineas*: fragments, M.28, 6.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁵⁵ Hsieh, 'The Other Side of the Picture,' 25.

correspondent in *Three Guineas* is similarly a device to allow her to address her male readers, who are most likely to respond negatively to her critique of dictatorial patriarchy, as if they are complicit in her pacifist stance. As she alludes to the greater status and privileges of ‘Englishmen’ in comparison to ‘Englishwomen’ in the holograph of the third chapter, Woolf first defines ‘Englishmen’ as ‘your sex,’ then as ‘your class,’ and then finally she deletes both and inserts ‘our fathers.’³⁵⁶ This revision tones down her narrator’s allocation of blame towards her male reader, drawing the two correspondents together in collusion against a shared opponent. Woolf’s female narrator conspires with her brother against the lingering activities and beliefs of a previous generation.

In the published version of *Three Guineas*, Woolf revised this passage further; here the narrator tells her male addressee she ‘has no wish to be “English” on the same terms that you yourself are “English”.’³⁵⁷ Woolf’s reinstatement of the second person pronoun reflects her desire to avoid overt conciliation whilst retaining her reader’s favour. She drops the explicit distinction between men and women in an attempt to lessen her chances of being dismissed as a fanatical feminist protester. Shortly after, she even goes so far as to burn the word ‘feminist’ so that men and women might work together ‘for the same cause.’³⁵⁸ Woolf’s famous renunciation of this word is enacted by her narrator so that ‘in that clearer air’ that follows, it might become evident that the ‘daughters of educated men who were called, to their resentment, “feminists” were in fact the advance guard’ of her correspondent’s peace movement.³⁵⁹ ‘The whole iniquity of dictatorship,’ she asserts:

whether in Oxford or Cambridge, in Whitehall or Downing Street, against Jews or against women, in England, or in Germany, in Italy or in Spain is now apparent to you. But now we are fighting together. The daughters and sons of educated men are fighting side by side.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Woolf, *Three Guineas*: fragments, M.28, 7.

³⁵⁷ *TG*, 301.

³⁵⁸ *TG*, 303. Lucy Delap’s *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) provides a detailed discussion of the changing usage of the term ‘feminism’ through the early twentieth century, noting that the ‘ambivalence about the term can help to explain Virginia Woolf’s emphatic rejection of [it] ... in her 1938 polemic’ (323).

³⁵⁹ *TG*, 303.

³⁶⁰ *TG*, 304.

Woolf's critique of patriarchy is presented forthrightly in *Three Guineas*, but the narrator's strictly controlled tone retains the underlying distant and objective stance developed in her draft, even at her most personable, in an attempt to curtail hostility in her readers towards her cultural criticism. E. M. Forster's sceptical reaction to Woolf's feminist pacifism in his lecture indicates that her espousal and stylistic use of indifference in *Three Guineas* was not necessarily successful in calming her detractors. Yet perhaps Woolf would not have been entirely displeased with Forster's incredulous description of her analysis in *Three Guineas* as 'unreasonable.'³⁶¹ This work was after all the culmination of the socio-political project with which, on 16 February 1932, she had hoped 'to blow up St Pauls [*sic*].'³⁶²

Conclusion

Tracing the development of Woolf's feminist-pacifist argument in the 1930s, and her expression of it through the multiple texts related to *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, advances our understanding of the complex relationships between these works and her intentions in them. The change witnessed in her works during the last decade of her life does not reflect an entirely new political conviction but rather an expansion of her previous feminism, a wish to be more vocal in her cultural criticism and a need to support this move with thorough research and evidencing of her feminist and anti-fascist analysis. Woolf's pacifist stance in *Three Guineas*, viewed critically by many of her contemporaries as a passive denial of, or refusal to engage with, the pressing political situation in fact represents an active position of protest, if an idealistic one. Mark Kurlansky would describe her argument in *Three Guineas* as one of 'nonviolence,' a term which he defines and outlines in contrast to pacifism:

Nonviolence is not the same thing as pacifism. ... Pacifism is treated almost as a psychological condition. Pacifism is harmless and therefore easier to accept than nonviolence, which is dangerous. ... Nonviolence, exactly like violence, is a means of persuasion, a technique for political activism, a recipe for prevailing.³⁶³

³⁶¹ Forster, *Virginia Woolf*, 24.

³⁶² *D* 4: 77.

³⁶³ Mark Kurlansky, *Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), 5-6.

During the 1930s, non-violent resistance to British rule in India had alerted the British government and the world at large to the potential power that pacifist protest could wield as a political tool. Woolf noted Gandhi's release from prison in her diary on 26 January 1931, an event that was widely reported following his imprisonment for civil disobedience in May 1930 after leading the Dandi Salt March during March-April 1930.³⁶⁴ From her picture of 'some vigorous young woman [...] marching through [war]' in 1916, to her concept of indifference as a means to 'materially help to prevent war' in 1938, Woolf's pacifism is based on the conviction that as outsiders women are well placed to devise an active non-violent force with which to deter militarism.³⁶⁵

The erratic tone of *Three Guineas* evolved alongside Woolf's extensive exploration of British patriarchy through her writing of *The Pargiters*, but the deletion of this tone and explicit cultural criticism from the published version of *The Years* crucially indicates a difference in Woolf's aim for the two works. The 'ambiguity in style' of *Three Guineas* 'points to the complexity of her ideas of affects and aesthetics/politics,' as Hsieh argues, but it also highlights Woolf's determined effort to forcefully persuade her audience of her socio-political convictions in this text.³⁶⁶ This effort was recognised by contemporary readers. Silver notes that Woolf's style was praised in almost all of the surviving letters she received in response to *Three Guineas*, many of which admired 'her ability to slip otherwise unpalatable truths down unsuspecting throats.'³⁶⁷ Pippa Strachey, for example, delighted that Woolf had written '[s]omething that the gentlemen of our acquaintance will be forced to take up on account of its author & will be unable to put down on account of its amusingness until they have reached the bitter end.'³⁶⁸ *Three Guineas* differs so visibly from the rest of Woolf's output because she decided to embrace the urge to propagandise in this text, which she had fought so hard to avoid in her writing of *The Years*. In this respect, *The Years* and *Three Guineas* cannot be considered a single 'work' in the terminology of textual and genetic criticism because the purpose and politics of each are too clearly

³⁶⁴ D 4: 8. For an account of the Salt March protest, Gandhi's involvement and its effect see Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi: A Study in Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1968), 285-287. For an introduction to Gandhi's use of the term 'non-violence' see M. K. Gandhi, *For Pacifists* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1949).

³⁶⁵ L 2: 76; TG, 314.

³⁶⁶ Hsieh, 'The Other Side of the Picture,' 26.

³⁶⁷ Silver, 'Three Guineas Before and After,' 261.

³⁶⁸ Letter from Pippa Strachey to Woolf, quoted in Silver, 'Three Guineas Before and After,' 261.

distinguishable for them to be one literary endeavour, even though the reading and writing processes that produced them are impossible to tease completely apart. However, the challenging style and structure of *Three Guineas* clearly reflect the same desire with which Woolf embarked on *The Pargiters*: to accurately evidence and persuasively argue her cultural criticism. The work's footnotes recall the journalistic impulse with which she first began researching her 'novel-essay' project in 1931. A genetic approach to these texts reveals the extent to which Woolf's 1930s cultural criticism evolved out of her earlier feminist politics, her journalistic practice and her formal experimentalism. The novel and the polemic may not strictly be one book but they are unmistakably two sides of the same project and together represent an interweaving and sustained reworking of the major strands of Woolf's earlier critiques of patriarchy.

Facing the Future: Woolf on Art in Times of Chaos, 1932-1941

Introduction

On 10 November 1936, four months into the Spanish Civil War, Woolf recorded with anxiety: 'Madrid not fallen. Chaos. Slaughter. War surrounding our island.'¹ In an article written contemporaneously for the *Daily Worker*, 'Why Art To-day Follows Politics,' Woolf debated art's social role in this ominous political climate.² The role of art in times of national and international crisis became a recurrent concern for Woolf in the later interwar period, an era in which, as Richard Overy argues, 'networks of anxiety' pervaded British consciousness, encouraging 'the belief that the Western world was doomed' long before the outbreak of World War II on 1 September 1939.³ 'By early 1938,' when Woolf began her final novel, 'the idea of war as a systemic inevitability was widespread.'⁴ Composed between April 1938 and March 1941, *Between the Acts* contemplates the position of English culture and society with more urgency and less certainty than any of Woolf's writings in the preceding decade. Where *The Years* ended with sunrise and a poignant 'air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace,' *Between the Acts* closes with sunset and an evocative depiction of impending conflict that echoes 'Conrad's image of imperialism discovering the savagery at its own heart' in *Heart of Darkness*.⁵ Before they can embrace, and from that embrace perhaps produce 'another life,' Isa and Giles Oliver 'must fight, as the dog fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of the night.'⁶ The endings of Woolf's penultimate and final novel suggest the shift in Britain's political outlook from the turbulent but ostensibly neutral period in which *The Years* evolved, 1931-1937, to the pre-war and wartime era in which *Between the Acts* grew into being. This shift is similarly reflected

¹ *D* 5: 32.

² Virginia Woolf, 'Why Art To-day Follows Politics,' *Daily Worker*, 14 December 1936, 4.

³ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Penguin, 2009), 7.

⁴ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 316. 'It is difficult to date with any precision the point at which war seemed a certainty,' Overy notes, but by early 1938 prominent intellectuals were lecturing on 'The War Horizon' and 'The Present World War' 'as if war were now a visible part of the political landscape' (314-316).

⁵ *Y*, 413; Gillian Beer, 'Between the Acts: Resisting the End,' in *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 126.

⁶ *BA*, 129.

by Woolf's intense preoccupation in her last novel with the question of what solace or practical aid literature can provide society in times of chaos.

This chapter reads *Between the Acts* as a sustained work of cultural criticism through which Woolf interrogates art's social role and delivers an oblique feminist-pacifist commentary on England's past, present and future. In contrast to the last chapter of this thesis my analysis here extends beyond the draft documents that directly evidence this novel's evolution (although this pre-publication material will also receive attention), tracing how Woolf's examination of English literature and society in her final work evolved from her cultural criticism in earlier published texts. Writing her autobiographical 'Sketch of the Past' on 2 May 1939, Woolf acknowledged the potential for the present to change her feelings and opinions of the past; 'What I write today,' she reflected, 'I should not write in a year's time.'⁷ This chapter attempts to be sensitive to similar fluctuations in Woolf's thinking, recognising that her opinion of art's social role was equally liable to be 'much affected by the present moment' in the volatile political environment of 1932-1941.⁸ Woolf's cultural criticism in her final work developed out of, and beyond, her earlier feminist-pacifist critiques of patriarchy and her essayistic statements on the relation of aesthetics to politics between 1932 and 1940. In *Between the Acts* Woolf explores communal fears for the future of English culture, British society, and Western civilization in the face of international conflict with grim pessimism while, paradoxically, maintaining a persistent hope that from this conflict a positive new future for Britain and for Europe might emerge.

Set on one day in mid-June 1939, less than three months before Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September, Woolf's last novel recaptures the historical moment directly preceding the outbreak of World War II for an audience now living through that event. This dating accentuates the wartime moment, emphasising the future that the reader knows to be approaching, while also reminding the reader that the wartime moment, like the pre-war moment, is subject to change, cannot last forever, and will one day give way to another post-war era. Following its publication in July 1941, nearly two years into World War II and four months after Woolf's suicide, the bleak outlook of *Between the Acts* attracted most attention in early critical readings of the novel. David

⁷ MB, 87.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Daiches described the book as ‘a lyrical tragedy whose hero is England,’ Jean Guiguet contended that Woolf had never ‘expressed her pessimism so categorically,’ and Madeline Moore declared *Between the Acts* ‘the saddest story I’ve ever heard.’⁹ Joan Bennett conversely suggested that the novel’s ‘scenes are comic, at times even farcical, as often as they are moving.’¹⁰ Bennett’s reading of *Between the Acts* as tragicomedy has most in common with more recent studies of the novel, which tend to stress that alongside anticipating the demise of English parochial life Woolf also humorously exposes and mocks the imperialist values, localised thinking and patriarchal gender roles of the society whose passing she predicts and ambivalently mourns in this text. Gillian Beer, whose feminist-historicist reassessments of *Between the Acts* in the 1980s and early 1990s have greatly influenced subsequent readings of the novel, describes *Between the Acts* as ‘Woolf’s most mischievous and playful work, as well as one that muses much upon death and extinction.’¹¹ In this novel, Beer argues, ‘Woolf wants to explore how England came to be; and how it came to be as she described it in *Three Guineas*, patriarchal, imperialist and class-ridden.’¹² *Between the Acts* acknowledges and challenges these characteristics in English society through satire, while also seeking ‘to produce another idea of England, one which might survive, but survive without portentousness.’¹³

More recently Jed Esty has interpreted *Between the Acts* as part of an ‘anthropological turn’ within the late work of modernist writers, including E. M. Forster, T. S. Eliot and Woolf, who, faced with the destruction of British buildings, people and culture by war and the probable breakdown of Empire, began to explore national consciousness.¹⁴ ‘For Woolf,’ Esty argued, ‘the political crises of the time compelled intellectuals to think nationally, but also shifted the real terms of national

⁹ David Daiches, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Poetry London, 1945), 114; Jean Guiguet, *Virginia Woolf and her Works*, trans., Jean Stewart (London: Hogarth, 1965), 327; Madeline Moore, *The Short Season Between Two Silences: The Mystical and the Political in the Novels of Virginia Woolf* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 147.

¹⁰ Joan Bennett, *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 131.

¹¹ Beer, ‘*Between the Acts*: Resisting the End,’ 125.

¹² *Ibid.*, 147.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 2. A more thorough negotiation of Esty’s view of late modernism as a whole follows in my conclusion.

identity away from aggressive Britishness, toward humane Englishness.’¹⁵ The mischievous cultural criticism of Woolf’s final novel certainly highlights the tyrannical xenophobic and warmongering tendencies of British nationalism whilst also trying ‘to find palatable ways to express her affinity for England’ and imagine a future for English society.¹⁶ Yet, as Marina MacKay observes, Esty’s central thesis requires us ‘to accept the premise that high modernism ... was not deeply interested in the national culture’ before the political upheavals of the 1930s.¹⁷ His reading of Woolf ignores her earlier articulations of attachment to England and her scrutiny of this sentiment. The sight of a wedding at Rodmell Parish Church on 22 September 1928, for example, prompted Woolf to contemplate the nature of Englishness and the extent of her national feeling:

And I felt this is the heart of England—this wedding in the country: history I felt; Cromwell; The Osbournes; Dorothy’s shepherdesses singing: of all of whom [the bride and groom] seem more the descendants than I am: as if they represented the unconscious breathing of England & L[eonard] & I, leaning over the wall, were detached, unconnected. [...] We dont [*sic*] belong to any ‘class’ [...] might as well be French or German. Yet I am English in some way—¹⁸

This quotation illustrates how for Woolf, as Julia Briggs asserts, ‘the English landscape was inextricably bound up with English literature.’¹⁹ It also demonstrates how her sympathy with the myth of England as a harmonious, rural idyll and her sense of being ‘English in some way’ coexisted throughout her life with her sense of being an outsider and her vehement anti-patriotism.²⁰ The useful distinction Esty makes between Britishness and Englishness in *Between the Acts* might equally be applied to Woolf’s earlier works; the *London Scene* essays, for instance, discussed in Chapter 2, celebrate England’s literature, countryside and the vibrancy of London life, while also critiquing the cultural values of capitalist, patriarchal and imperialist Britain. Yet, Woolf was just as sceptical of Englishness as she was of Britishness. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Septimus Warren Smith wryly recalls the romantic notion of ‘an England [...] consist[ing] almost

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁷ Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17.

¹⁸ *D* 3: 197-198.

¹⁹ Julia Briggs, ‘Almost Ashamed of England Being So English,’ in *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 192. Briggs’s article provides a useful overview of portrayals of Englishness throughout Woolf’s oeuvre, as well as detailing the late nineteenth-century conception of ‘Englishness’ as ‘an ideal of the past ... that bypassed factories and cities to dwell upon the countryside’ (190).

²⁰ *D* 3: 198.

entirely of Shakespeare's plays' for which he went to war.²¹ Englishness and Britishness may appear to present two separate identities in *Between the Acts* but in fact Woolf's interest throughout is in negotiating the links between them. Her novel suggests that English cultural values feed directly into Britain's political actions.

MacKay suggests that 'Woolf's surprising participation in what have since become consolatory cultural memories of the war' as 'a moment of lost communality and unity' sheds 'a useful light on the late politics of a writer once thought apolitical and now routinely presented as a leftwing radical.'²² 'Woolf's war awakening makes it impossible to superimpose the pacifist polemic of *Three Guineas* on her last novel,' MacKay contends, positioning herself in opposition to critics who claim Woolf's pacifism never wavered.²³ My reading of *Between the Acts* recognises and explores Woolf's tempering of her pacifist argument in her last novel in comparison to her earlier polemic, while also maintaining that Woolf's hopes for England's future in *Between the Acts* continue to revolve around a feminist-pacifist vision of revolutionising British society and resisting its inclination to war by dissolving patriarchal gender roles.²⁴ Just as her anti-patriotism remains the dominant theme of *Between the Acts*, despite this text's exploration of national consciousness, her pacifism remains equally important, if submerged, to her analysis of British society in this text.

Anna Snaith posits that 'the fixity of [Woolf's] pacifism did not translate itself into her writing' in her final novel because her arguments against war were superseded in the event of a return to international conflict by 'her concern with the audience and artist's roles both during war and in general.'²⁵ The development of Woolf's late cultural criticism was motivated from the start of the 1930s by her conviction that, as intellectuals, artists have a responsibility to respond publically to social, political and economic upheaval in times of national or international crisis. How then does *Between the Acts*, an ostensibly aesthetic text, function as a work of social commentary? Mark

²¹ MD, 94.

²² MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, 23.

²³ *Ibid.*, 30. MacKay offers as a contrast to her own position the stance of Anna Snaith who claims that 'Woolf's commitment to pacifism ... allowed no oscillation' in *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 145.

²⁴ Kathy J. Phillips similarly observes the importance of Woolf's analysis of patriarchy in *Between the Acts* as a means to present 'the past not as a sanctuary but as a source of modern problems of colonization, gender, and class'; see Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 184.

²⁵ Snaith, *Public and Private Negotiations*, 146.

Hussey views 'Woolf's fiction ... [as] a kind of Trojan horse' that subtly smuggles cultural criticism into the reader's thought processes.²⁶ He contends that by removing most of her explicit references to World War I from the draft of the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*, for example, Woolf aimed through a 'pattern of occlusion' to fashion a deceptively apolitical appearance for her fiction that would conceal her critique of war.²⁷ 'The connections between male supremacy and war are rarely explicit' in Woolf's novels, Hussey suggests, because she 'wants the reader to *become aware* for herself in the process of reading.'²⁸ '[Woolf] is not writing manifestos,' he argues, 'but creating art that subtly transforms our perspectives by enacting in its form a subversive content.'²⁹

Building on Hussey's Trojan horse metaphor, this chapter investigates how *Between the Acts* brings together elements of Woolf's feminist-pacifist analysis in the 1930s and conceals them, by design, within a narrative framework that prompts her readers to take a closer look at themselves and their complicity in the patriarchal social order that engenders war. Following a brief discussion of the textual history of *Between the Acts* and the social and political context in which this novel was written, this chapter explores Woolf's public statements on the relation of aesthetics to politics during 1932-1940. My focus here is on three texts written by Woolf in response to the increasing amount of politicised art, poetry and fiction produced in this period: 'A Letter to a Young Poet' (1932), 'Why Art To-day Follows Politics' (1936) and 'The Leaning Tower' (1940), which, for the purpose of this chapter, function as 'pre-texts' to Woolf's analysis of art's social role in *Between the Acts*. The writers Woolf addresses in these essays are the predominately male, leftist poets and related prose writers commonly grouped together in later 1930s criticism as 'The Auden Generation.'³⁰ It is these writers to whom this chapter refers when discussing Woolf's perception of this decade's

²⁶ Mark Hussey, 'Living in a War Zone: An Introduction to Virginia Woolf as a War Novelist,' in *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*, ed. Mark Hussey (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 10.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, (emphasis in original).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ See Samuel Hynes's classic *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (London: Bodley Head, 1976). As my introduction details, a broader view of 1930s literature has since been suggested by Valentine Cunningham's *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), Jane Dowson, ed., *Women's Poetry of the 1930s: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1996) and Janet Montifiore's *Men and Women Writers of the 1930s: The Dangerous Flood of History* (London: Routledge, 1996).

‘leaning-tower generation,’ although it should be noted that Woolf was aware that these writers were not the only younger producers of literature working in this period.³¹

Woolf made particular efforts to champion the work of the young female poet Joan Easdale through the Hogarth Press in the 1930s, for example, as she felt Easdale to be ‘worth taking trouble over’ at a time when the province of poetry was dominated by ‘a racket of young men.’³² Her public responses to political art evolved in this period as war became increasingly likely and then following its outbreak. This section closes with a reflection on how her essayistic statements on the association between art and politics are absorbed into an oblique commentary on the subject in *Between the Acts*.

The second section of this chapter focuses on Woolf’s presentation of England’s past, present and future in *Between the Acts*. Her portrait of the inhabitants of Pointz Hall and the surrounding community stresses their interconnectedness. In contrast to MacKay’s interpretation of this novel as a patriotic evocation of cultural unity, my discussion reads this sense of communality as indicative of Woolf’s conviction that humanity is bound together by aspects of shared experience capable of traversing national boundaries. Woolf’s pageant-play may contain ‘moments of communal longing’ as Esty identifies, but it also, as Briggs suggests, ‘turns Englishness into a joke.’³³ The version of English history offered here, and throughout the novel, is determinedly anti-patriotic and predominantly omits national or political events. Delivering her history through references to books and literature, Woolf focuses instead on the large-scale prehistoric geological and ecological changes that have made England – the splitting of Britain from the continent, the extinction of the ‘mammoths in Piccadilly’ – and, at the other extreme, the social and cultural changes that affect individuals, for example, changes in material living conditions.³⁴

Woolf’s treatment of the ‘present’ moment, in contrast, does not omit politics. The novel is scattered with allusions to late 1930s national events but these often relate not to Britain but to surrounding European nations. A reference in Bart Oliver’s newspaper to ‘M. Daladier [...] pegging down the franc,’ for example, alludes to the

³¹ Virginia Woolf, ‘The Leaning Tower,’ in *CE* 2, 178.

³² Mark Hussey, “‘W. H. Day Spender’ Had a Sister: Joan Adeney Easdale,’ a paper read at the *Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, University of Denver, 21 June 2008.

³³ Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, 92; Briggs, ‘Almost Ashamed of England Being So English,’ 202.

³⁴ *BA*, 20.

decision of Edouard Daladier, then Prime Minister of France, to drastically devalue the franc in order to stabilise it at a lower level in early May 1938.³⁵ Daladier defended the action as necessary in part because of the detrimental impact of ‘foreign affairs ... [and] the divisions of Europe, which did not cease to arm’ on the struggling French economy.³⁶ The importance of such details to Woolf’s conception of *Between the Acts* is indicated by the mention of ‘Daladier ... the franc’ in her first draft of the novel shortly after the event.³⁷ The process of journalistic scrapbooking that shaped *The Years* and *Three Guineas* was incorporated directly into the writing of Woolf’s later fictional text. The continued presence of the Daladier allusion within Bart Oliver’s June 1939 newspaper in the published novel adds an echo of fact and a sense of unreality to the pre-war setting through muddying her dating of the present moment. Such evocative allusions in the narrative serve to continually undercut her characters’ pride in and fondness for Englishness and their sense of power as Britons through reminding them, and Woolf’s readers, of Britain’s vulnerable geographical and political position within Europe. Her portrayals of England as a threatened island nation in *Between the Acts* emotively echo her own anxious description in November 1936 of ‘War surrounding our island.’³⁸ Nationalistic war propaganda responded to this vulnerability with assurances of Britain’s difference from and supremacy over her European adversaries. Woolf’s representation of England’s past and present in *Between the Acts* conversely encourages an internationalist outlook, prompting her readers to recognise shared aspects of human experience, common to all regardless of historical moment or nationality, rather than social differences. The many central European Jewish refugees seeking asylum in June 1939, a nameless voice from the pageant audience reminds us, are simply ‘People like ourselves, beginning life again.’³⁹ The community surrounding Pointz Hall exists not only in English society, of which, for the purposes of the novel, they are representative, but also, Woolf insists, within a wider European community to which they are politically and culturally tied.

³⁵ BA, 11.

³⁶ Quotation from Daladier’s broadcast address to France on 4 May 1938, reported in ‘The Daladier Franc: Stabilization At New Level, 175 To The Pound,’ *The Times*, 5 May 1938, 16.

³⁷ PH, 54. Daladier and ‘The franc ... the franc’ also appear on page 20 of the Early Typescript (ETS) (PH 45-46). Mitchell A. Leaska estimates these pages were written during 2 April–15 June 1938. The identification of the Daladier reference evidently dates their composition to the latter half on this period.

³⁸ D 5: 32.

³⁹ BA, 74.

The Textual and Contextual History of *Between the Acts*

Between the Acts is a consciously wartime text, but this novel's history begins in the pre-war era. The earliest dated draft of *Between the Acts*, initially titled 'Pointz Hall,' suggests that the work was begun on 2 April 1938.⁴⁰ Woolf's first reference to the text appears in her diary on Tuesday 11 April, a day before the proofs of *Three Guineas* were due to arrive, as she engaged in the 'sober drudgery' of beginning her biography of *Roger Fry* to 'tide over the horrid anti climax of 3 Gs.'⁴¹ With twenty pages of her biography 'put down' Woolf found her mind 'free for fresh adventures'; she recorded, 'Last night I began making up again: Summers night: a complete whole: that's my idea.'⁴² On 26 April 1938 she wrote of the novel that was to become *Between the Acts*:

why not Poyntzet Hall: a centre: all lit[erature] discussed in connection with real little incongruous living humour; & anything that comes into my head; but "I" rejected: 'We' substituted: to whom at the end there shall be an invocation? [...] And English country; & a scenic old house—and a terrace where nursemaids walk? & people passing—and a perpetual variety & change from intensity to prose. & facts—and notes; &—but eno'.⁴³

From the first, Woolf had a clear idea of her final novel as a work about community, beginning with a home as *The Years* had done, but radiating out from this point through its rural location to encompass also the surrounding 'English country' and evoke a collective 'We' in a manner reminiscent of the ensemble voice of *The Waves*.⁴⁴ This shift towards the collective was perhaps in part a response to the frequent accusations of individualism levelled against Woolf and Bloomsbury in the 1930s.⁴⁵ Her method of exploring contemporary society in this text through depicting the interactions of individuals functions as a retort to such criticism and expands her earlier fictional

⁴⁰ This is the draft which Leaska names Early Typescript (ETS) in *PH*.

⁴¹ *D* 5: 133.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *D* 5: 135.

⁴⁴ Surveying Woolf's collective view of identity in *Between the Acts*, Mark Hussey convincingly argues that 'a dynamic interplay between the inner voice and the world of relationship' is central not only to this novel but to all Woolf's fiction; see "'I' Rejected: 'We' Substituted": Self and Society in *Between the Acts*,' in *Reading and Writing Women's Lives: A Study of the Novel of Manners*, ed. Bege K. Bowers and Barbara Brothers (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990), 145.

⁴⁵ In *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain* (1935) Dimitri Mirsky declared, 'The basic trait of Bloomsbury is a mixture of philosophic rationalism, political rationalism, aestheticism, and a cult of the individuality. ... Being theoreticians of the passive, dividend-drawing and consuming section of the bourgeoisie, they are extremely intrigued by their own minutest inner experiences, and count them an inexhaustible treasure store of further more minutious inner experiences'; quoted in *The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs, Commentary and Criticism*, ed. S. P. Rosenbaum (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 384.

practice of representing domestic relations as a microcosm of wider society's behaviour and concerns.⁴⁶

Practically, *Between the Acts* was written in a quite different manner from Woolf's earlier novels. She wrote her first version straight onto the typewriter in snatches of time taken between working on *Roger Fry* rather than drafting each section first in longhand. Each of the three major typescript versions of the novel, and the numerous existent fragments, reveal that the form and action of this book was achieved almost from the novel's first conception. In sharp contrast to the work originally conceived as *The Pargiters* and realised as *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, *Between the Acts* appears to have been through very few major changes. Declaring 'The Pageant—or Poyntz Hall' finished on 23 November 1940, Woolf reflected:

I am a little triumphant about the book. [...] I think its [*sic*] more quintessential than the others, More milk skimmed off. A richer pat, certainly a fresher than that misery *The Years*. I've enjoyed writing almost every page. This book was only (I must note) written at intervals when the pressure was at its highest, during the drudgery of *Roger*.⁴⁷

This note of triumph was soon lost despite Leonard Woolf's high praise of the novel; in a letter to John Lehmann sent a day before her suicide Woolf called *Between the Acts* 'too silly and trivial' for publication in its current state and insisted that she must revise further to avoid a financial loss.⁴⁸ Leonard enclosed a covering note with his wife's letter informing Lehmann of his certainty 'that Virginia was on the verge of a complete nervous breakdown' and asking him not to reply at present.⁴⁹ In the event the novel was published, with Leonard as editor for the proofs, on 17 July 1941.

As readers, once we are familiar with this historical context, it is impossible to read *Between the Acts* without an awareness of its status as Woolf's final novel and without knowledge that while considering revising this book for publication she decided to end her life. The lessons learnt from genetic criticism about the potentially distorting

⁴⁶ Consider, for example, the generational divide between Katherine Hilbery and her mother in *Night and Day* as symbolic of the changing social conventions between the Edwardian and Georgian eras; or the lack of understanding between Clarissa and her family in *Mrs Dalloway* as a symbol for the inability of post-war British society to recover and reconnect emotionally following the horrors of World War I.

⁴⁷ *D* 5: 340.

⁴⁸ *L* 6: 486.

⁴⁹ *L* 6: 486, *n* 1.

effect of retrospective reading in Chapter 3, however, should warn us against interpreting *Between the Acts* too rigidly through our awareness of Woolf's suicide on 28 March 1941. Knowledge of this event leads Jean Guiguet to suggest that *Between the Acts* 'constitutes a new and final stage in that eternal quest in which the art of Virginia Woolf consisted,' as if Woolf herself imagined this novel to be the climax and finishing flourish of her literary career.⁵⁰ Yet up until March 1941, far from viewing *Between the Acts* as her final literary act, Woolf was busy working on new literary projects including, notably, a work of criticism to follow in the vein of her *Common Reader* collections for which she had already begun two essays, 'Anon' and 'The Reader.'⁵¹ 'Between the Acts is not a culmination,' Snaith observes, 'it is a text resulting from the contingencies of Woolf's situation between 1938 and 1941.'⁵² Reading backwards can tempt critics to see the novel's allusions to death and its premonitions of destruction, dispersal and demise primarily as omens of Woolf's own personal ending rather than recognising that the novel's musings on death are evocative of collective fears about the future of England and wider European society in anticipation and then following the onset of a second world war.⁵³ The novel responds, Beer notes, to Woolf's awareness of the fate of the Jews on the continent, to the threat of German invasion during the Battle of Britain in 1940, and to her 'matter of fact talk' with Leonard about the possibility of 'suicide if Hitler lands.'⁵⁴ Evidently Woolf's state of mind while writing informed her text, but her last depressive episode and subsequent suicide are far less significant to *Between the Acts* – the major themes and action of

⁵⁰ Guiguet, *Woolf and her Works*, 322-323.

⁵¹ See "'Anon" and "The Reader": Virginia Woolf's Last Essays,' ed. Brenda R. Silver, *Twentieth Century Literature* 25 (1979): 356-435; and Snaith, *Public and Private Negotiations*, 153-156. Nora Eisenberg discusses the links between 'Anon' and *Between the Acts* in 'Virginia Woolf's Last Words on Words: *Between the Acts* and "Anon",' in *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Macmillan, 1981), 253-266.

⁵² Snaith, *Public and Private Negotiations*, 148.

⁵³ In *Woolf and her Works*, Guiguet uses the theatrical imagery of *Between the Acts*'s finale to speculate about Woolf's mental health in her final months; 'Had she, too,' he asks, 'found herself at the end of that play, or rather of that *entr'acte* which we call life, ready to see the curtain rise on a stage lit up, at last, by that light to which she aspired?' (327) (emphasis in original).

⁵⁴ Beer, 'Between the Acts: Resisting the End,' 125; *D* 5: 284-285. Woolf recorded several discussions of suicide in the event of invasion during May-June 1940 (*D* 5: 284-285, 292, 293, 294), roughly coinciding with the evacuation of British and French troops from Dunkirk between 26 May and 4 June 1940.

which had been set two years before her death – than the intense atmosphere of political unrest in which Woolf conceived and produced this novel.⁵⁵

Three weeks before Woolf began her draft of *Pointz Hall* on 2 April 1938, the Nazi Third Reich made their first military expansion of German territory: ‘Hitler has invaded Austria,’ she noted on 12 March, ‘that is at 10 last night his army crossed the frontier, unresisted [*sic*].’⁵⁶ ‘This fact, which combines with the Russian trials,’ Woolf continued, alluding to the public trial in Moscow of twenty-one Stalin opponents under spurious charges of treason or terrorism, ‘puts its thorn into my morning.’⁵⁷ The threat of invasion hangs ominously over the Pointz Hall community throughout *Between the Acts* despite their lack of voiced interest in events beyond their locality. The novel’s composition saw the end of the Spanish Civil War and General Franco’s triumph with the final fall of Madrid. It also saw the mass arrival of Jewish and intellectual refugees to Britain and France from Central Europe prompted by the horrific persecution of ethnic, religious and social minorities under the German Nazi government.⁵⁸ Finally, it witnessed Germany’s invasion of Poland, the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, and the airborne Battle of Britain that followed in 1940 during which the Woolfs’ London home was demolished. Writing to Ethel Smyth on 1 March 1941 Woolf asked:

Do you feel [...] that this is the worst stage of the war? I do. I was saying to Leonard, we have no future. He says that’s [*sic*] what gives him hope. [...] What I feel is the suspense when nothing actually happens.⁵⁹

Suspense, fear of impending catastrophe, boredom and hope can all be found in *Between the Acts*. Both a pre-war and a wartime novel, this work asks what future there can be for English village life, for England as a whole, in the midst of European conflict.

⁵⁵ By 19 December 1938 Woolf had ‘written [...] 120 pages of *Pointz Hall*,’ which she then planned to make ‘a 220 page book’ (*D* 5: 193). These first 120 pages of the ETS sketch out the narrative of *Between the Acts* through to the centre of the pageant; the characters, scenes, mood and even large portions of the dialogue in the draft show remarkable similarities to Woolf’s published text (see *PH*, 33-103). On 23 November 1940 Woolf triumphantly declared *Between the Acts* finished, turning in the same diary entry to consider ‘writ[ing] the first chapter of [her] next book’ (*D* 5: 340).

⁵⁶ *D* 5: 129.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Woolf met several such refugees in the 1930s and early 1940s including, notably, Sigmund Freud, who she visited in Hampstead on 28 January 1939 (see *D* 5: 202). Freud had fled Vienna the previous summer with the assistance of a wealthy and influential pupil, Princess Marie Bonaparte (see *D* 5: 202-203, *n* 18).

⁵⁹ *L* 6: 475.

Political literature had been thriving in Britain throughout the ten-year build-up to the period of extreme international social and political chaos during which *Between the Acts* evolved. Looking back in 1978, Stephen Spender argued that ‘the 1930s was the decade in which young writers became involved in politics,’ adding that ‘this generation’s politics was almost exclusively those of the Left.’⁶⁰ Debates about the proper relation between aesthetics and politics raged across Europe in this period. At home and abroad, politicised societies of writers and artists emerged to defend culture against the threat of fascism. Woolf involved herself in the establishment of the British section of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture (IAWDC) in 1935.⁶¹ Yet she was inherently distrustful of art that had been produced as part of a writer’s political programme and rebuked those she reviewed who weaved social grievances into their work. Woolf’s disparaging attitude towards the political literature that thrived during the 1930s in her essays ‘A Letter to a Young Poet’ and ‘The Leaning Tower’ has helped to propagate the impression that she was entirely hostile to the fusing of political concerns with aesthetics. Shortly after finishing her ‘Letter to a Young Poet’ in 1932, however, Woolf turned her attention to how she might combine literature, social history and feminist argument in her planned ‘novel-essay,’ *The Pargiters*. As Jane Marcus noted in the first and still most comprehensive study of ‘Virginia Woolf on Art and Propaganda,’ this shared early evolution of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* should remind us that though ‘Leonard felt that art and politics should not be mixed ... Woolf was uncertain about this.’⁶² Notwithstanding her desire that poetry might escape ‘the burden of didacticism, of propaganda’ in ‘The Leaning Tower,’ if Woolf had completed and published her ‘novel-essay’ we might now have a quite different impression of her attitude to the fusion of politics with art and her stance on propagandistic literature.⁶³ The next section of this chapter attempts to determine what role Woolf desired for art within society in times of political upheaval through

⁶⁰ Stephen Spender, *The Thirties and After: Poetry, Politics, People 1933-70* (New York: Random House, 1978), 13.

⁶¹ Woolf’s association with the IAWDC and For Intellectual Liberty, a further antifascist group, were outlined in Chapter 3; for a full discussion of Woolf’s involvement in each see David Bradshaw, ‘British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s,’ 2 Parts, *Woolf Studies Annual* 3 (1997): 3-27; and *Woolf Studies Annual* 4 (1998): 41-66.

⁶² Jane Marcus, “‘No More Horses’: Virginia Woolf on Art and Propaganda,” in *Art & Anger: Reading Like a Woman* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 114.

⁶³ Woolf, ‘The Leaning Tower,’ 179.

investigating both Woolf's statements about the relationship between art and politics and her practice as a literary and political writer during 1932-1941.

Art in Times of Chaos

'[I]f newspapers were written by people whose sole object in writing was to tell the truth about politics and the truth about art,' Woolf argued in *Three Guineas*, 'we should not believe in war, and we should believe in art.'⁶⁴ Throughout the 1930s Woolf wrote of art as a faith to be believed in, just as 'the glory of war' had become a religion in her eyes amongst those who failed to recognise international conflict as merely 'a tedious game for elderly dilettantes [...] the tossing of bombs instead of balls over frontiers instead of nets.'⁶⁵ Woolf's statements in this 1938 text suggest a distinct separation in her mind between art and politics. This opposition is complicated in her later novel *Between the Acts*. Through the figure of Miss La Trobe and her precarious pageant, Woolf asks to what extent art can influence the outlook and behaviour of those who receive it and questions what role aesthetics can occupy in a society threatened by violence. This change in position in part reflects the environment of international conflict in which *Between the Acts* was written, but it also links back to a number of fundamental long-term contradictions in Woolf's thinking on the relation between aesthetics and politics. Throughout the 1930s, and, indeed, throughout her oeuvre, Woolf sustained an implicit belief in art's ability to humanise and elevate its appreciators above the barbaric behaviours of society in the mass while also maintaining that art and the artist are indelibly connected to, and the product of, the society in which they exist. The following investigation will tease out such discrepancies between Woolf's critical statements about the application of politics in art through the 1930s and early 1940s and her incorporation of political opinion within her own aesthetic and critical productions at this time.

Woolf's emergence as a public critic of contemporary culture in the early 1930s began with a statement of distaste for overtly political literature. 'A Letter to a Young Poet' was first published as part of the *Hogarth Letters* series as a prose pamphlet in

⁶⁴ *TG*, 295-296.

⁶⁵ *TG*, 295.

1932.⁶⁶ In this essay Woolf famously lamented the growing fashion for including political sentiment within contemporary verse. Her primary subject and imagined audience in this essay are the predominately male, leftist ‘leaning-tower’ generation of the 1930s, whose poetry she finds self-absorbed in outlook. Ostensibly written to John Lehmann, manager of the Hogarth Press and the ‘Young Poet’ of the title (Lehmann’s first collection, *A Garden Revisited*, had been published by Hogarth in September 1931), this public ‘letter/essay’ opens out to address simultaneously three further poets whose poems Woolf cites and critiques through the course of her discussion: W. H. Auden, Cecil Day-Lewis and Stephen Spender.⁶⁷ Although their names remain absent, by quoting from them Woolf directs her analysis of modern poetry to all four poets and their imitators. Figuring Lehmann and his contemporaries as adolescent malcontents, ‘dress[ing] up as Guy Fawkes and spring[ing] out upon timid old ladies at street corners, threatening death and demanding twopence-halfpenny,’ Woolf confronts the latent aggression and bitter disillusionment she finds in writing of this generation.⁶⁸ She begs her younger correspondents to ‘treat [themselves] with respect’ and ‘think twice’ before letting this discontent spill out into their work.⁶⁹ Her allegation that reading modern poetry is ‘rather like opening the door to a horde of rebels who swarm out attacking one in twenty places at once’ further stresses her aversion to the expression of personal or political anger in a literary text.⁷⁰ Contemporaneously read as an antagonistic declaration not only against those to whom it was addressed but also against the mixing of art and politics in general, the essay prompted a hostile response from Peter Quennell, friend of Lehmann and representative of the younger generation, who replied with his own Hogarth Letter, *A Letter to Mrs. Virginia Woolf*.⁷¹

Direct references to the relationship between art and politics are notably scarce in Woolf’s ‘Letter to a Young Poet’ but Quennell evidently recognised the debate as

⁶⁶ Virginia Woolf, *A Letter to a Young Poet* (London: Hogarth, 1932). References will be to the more accessible version of the essay collected in *E 5*.

⁶⁷ The poems included in ‘A Letter to a Young Poet,’ and the collections from which they are taken are as follows: W. H. Auden, ‘Poem II,’ in *Poems* (London: Faber, 1930), 39-40; John Lehmann, ‘To Penetrate that room,’ in *New Signatures: Poems by Several Hands*, ed. Michael Roberts (London: Hogarth, 1932), 75; Cecil Day-Lewis, ‘Poem XI,’ in *From Feathers to Iron* (London: Hogarth, 1931), 24; Stephen Spender, ‘At the Edge of Being,’ in *Twenty Poems* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1930), 2.

⁶⁸ Virginia Woolf, ‘A Letter to a Young Poet,’ in *E 5*, 309.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁷¹ Peter Quennell, *A Letter to Mrs. Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth, 1932).

implicitly present in her essay as he replied to her on the subject. After accusing Woolf of liking the verses of her younger poet correspondent 'even less than you admit,' Quennell urged Woolf to empathise with the discontented outlook of the younger generation who 'can recall barely five or six summers' before 'the War to End Wars.'⁷² 'Strange things happened in his adolescence,' Quennell noted ominously, reminding Woolf that the modern poet is 'the creature of his social and political setting' and that:

Whether your friend is directly concerned with politics or more sagaciously, perhaps, passes them by—he is an artist and politicians are politicians—he cannot escape the backwash which they raise and cannot be expected in an atmosphere of turmoil to preserve the equanimity of an Augustan poet.⁷³

Quennell suggested the wisdom and desirability of maintaining a divide between the artist and the politician even though his argument centred on the impossibility of separating the modern poet from the effects of the political climate. His *Letter* stresses this divide more forcefully than Woolf who avoids making such a definite statement about the association between art and politics in her essay. The crux of her dissatisfaction with contemporary writers in 'A Letter to a Young Poet' is their overt expression of political opinions within their writing which she reads as evidence of an insular, individualistic outlook (paradoxically mirroring the criticism 1930s writers and critics levelled against Woolf and her Bloomsbury coterie). She laments that 'for a long time now poetry has shirked contact with – what shall we call it? – Shall we [...] call it life?'⁷⁴ The modern poet 'is much less interested in what we have in common,' she argues, 'than in what he has apart.'⁷⁵ This insistence on literature's duty to record a wide range of individual and collective human experience, not only that experienced by its predominantly male, middle-class, university-educated producers, contains its own politicised artistic agenda.⁷⁶ While Woolf's mimetic aspirations for contemporary verse carry none of the overt didacticism of Phillip Sidney's conception of poetry as a 'representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth ... to teach and delight,' an oblique, instructive political statement can be located in her feminist-socialist concern that every

⁷² *Ibid.*, 5, 17.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 17, 20.

⁷⁴ Woolf, 'Letter to a Young Poet,' 310.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 314.

⁷⁶ It should be noted that Quennell and his leftist contemporaries aimed to evidence a much broader section of life in their poetry and prose than Woolf finds within their work.

variety of human life should find its expression in literature.⁷⁷ The distinction made between aesthetics and politics in Woolf's 'Letter to a Young Poet' is not as absolute as it first seems, yet she maintains, like Quennell, that the best literature should at least appear to be apolitical. Art has a responsibility, she suggests, to keep its nose clean.

This argument is developed and expressed at greater length in Woolf's 1936 article, 'Why Art To-day Follows Politics.'⁷⁸ This uncharacteristically explicit declaration on the relation between aesthetics and politics, written four months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War on 18 July 1936, grew out of a request from Elizabeth Watson – painter, Communist, and 'charming and persuasive ... friend of Quentin Bell' – who 'prevailed upon' Woolf to write the article on behalf of the Artists International Association (AIA) for the *Daily Worker*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).⁷⁹ The AIA, founded in London in 1933 at the moment of Hitler's rise to power in Germany, was a politically left-wing exhibiting society whose aim was to promote, 'The International Unity of Artists Against Imperialist War on the Soviet Union, Fascism and Colonial Oppression.'⁸⁰ Misha Black, one of the AIA's founders, later recalled that its 'roots were very strongly Communist' and that the group was 'initially very much a young man's organisation.'⁸¹ During the mid-1930s the AIA maintained fruitful relationships with both the *Left Review*, whose editors and contributors had styled themselves as 'The Writers' International,' and the *Daily Worker*, to which a number of AIA's members regularly wrote or contributed Marxist cartoons, notably James Boswell and James Fitton.⁸² As the organisation expanded, altering its manifesto to become a popular front 'against Fascism and War and the suppression of culture' in 1935, it began to attract associates with a broader range of leftist political consciences, including pacifists, like Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell.⁸³

⁷⁷ Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 79-80.

⁷⁸ The essay was posthumously renamed 'The Artist and Politics' by Leonard Woolf and reprinted in *The Moment and Other Essays*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth, 1952) and in *CE* 2. All references are to the *CE* version. The only significant variation from the *Daily Worker* text (excluding changes in punctuation) is indicated.

⁷⁹ Anne Olivier Bell identifies Watson as the impetus behind this article in *D* 5: 30, n 4.

⁸⁰ A quotation from the AIA's first manifesto statement in 1934, quoted in Lynda Morris and Robert Redford, *AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association 1933-1953* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1983), 11.

⁸¹ Quoted in Morris and Redford, *AIA*, 8.

⁸² Morris and Redford, *AIA*, 19.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 28.

Following the outbreak of Civil War in Spain, the AIA had over six hundred members in August 1936 including many of the most prominent British artists of the period: Augustus John, Stanley Spencer, Dame Laura Knight, Henry Moore and Ben Nicholson.⁸⁴ Woolf's decision to write an article for the organisation, to be published in the Communist Party newspaper on the occasion of the AIA's *Artists Help Spain* exhibition in December 1936, was a sign, as she informed Julian Bell on 14 November, that all around her 'politics [...] [were] raging faster and fiercer.'⁸⁵

'Obviously the writer is in such close touch with human life that any agitation in his subject matter must change his angle of vision,' Woolf argues at the start of her *Daily Worker* article, encompassing and extending her contention that collective experience should be the main subject of modern verse in 'A Letter to a Young Poet.'⁸⁶ In this atmosphere of increased political anxiety, Woolf asserts that to understand why the visual artist 'is affected by the state of society, we must try to define the relations of the artist to society.'⁸⁷ In 'times of peace,' she argues, figuring 'the artist' here as male, the artist:

held that since the value of his work depended upon freedom of mind, security of person, and immunity from practical affairs—for to mix art with politics, he held, was to adulterate it—he was absolved from political duties [...] and in return created what is called a work of art.⁸⁸

'Society on its side,' she continues, 'bound itself to run the state in such a manner that it paid the artist a living wage; asked no active help from him; and considered itself repaid by those works of art which have always formed one of its chief claims to distinction.'⁸⁹ In peacetime, the artist is granted detachment from society in order to write and paint 'without regard for the political agitations of the moment,' she maintains, because otherwise his productions would not provide the humanising escape from current affairs that we expect from art.⁹⁰ '[I]f *Bacchus and Ariadne* symbolized the conquest of Abyssinia; if *Figaro* expounded the doctrines of Hitler,' she contends, 'we should feel

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁵ *L* 6: 83.

⁸⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'The Artist and Politics,' in *CE* 2, 230. *DW* version reads 'it' for 'subject matter.'

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

cheated and imposed upon, as if, instead of bread made with flour, we were given bread made with plaster.⁹¹ However, Woolf's use of the past tense here is of note. The central precept on which her peacetime contract is based, that 'to mix art with politics [...] was to adulterate it,' is presented as outdated.⁹² Her allegation that art and politics are held apart by an unspoken agreement between society and its artists functions only in a remote, historical moment.

Woolf's intimation that Britain was no longer at peace in December 1936 sardonically alludes to the growing public pressure on the British government at this time, reported at length in the *Daily Worker*, to intervene against the nationalists in the Spanish Civil War. The paper's stance on this situation is epitomised by a cartoon printed on 4 December 1936, titled, ironically, 'Restricting the Conflict.'⁹³ A huddle of pin-striped figures, members of the League of Nations' 'Non-Intervention Committee' of which Britain was an enthusiastic proponent, are depicted pleading with a tight-lipped Adolf Hitler for 'assurance that we are just seeing things' as an army of rifle-bearing soldiers march behind with a Nazi flag in the direction of Madrid.⁹⁴ While the British government resolutely refused to send troops to Spain, the front page of the *Daily Worker* issue in which 'Why Art To-Day Follows Politics' appeared praised British volunteers who had recently joined the International Column in Madrid with the patriotic headline, 'Spain Now Sings "Tipperary": The Real Volunteers at Work.'⁹⁵ Edward Scroogie's account of the AIA's December exhibition, printed on the page facing Woolf's article, demonstrates the newspaper's positive representation of the popular turn against Britain's non-interventionist stance at this time.⁹⁶ On opening the show, Scroogie reports, the journalist A. J. Cummings declared that people might be surprised to find a man 'who had always been interested in pacifist organisations' introducing this exhibition, 'but they must realise that the time had come when, if democracy was to be saved, pacifism was not enough.'⁹⁷ A month earlier, on 12 November, the *Daily Worker* had printed close-up photographs of the bruised and

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 230.

⁹³ 'Restricting the Conflict,' *Daily Worker*, 4 December 1936, 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Pitcairn, Frank (Claud Cockburn), 'Spain Now Sings "Tipperary": The Real Volunteers At Work,' *Daily Worker*, 14 December 1936, 1.

⁹⁶ Edward Scroogie, 'Famous Artists Aid Spain By Giving Works,' *Daily Worker*, 14 December 1936, 5.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

blood-splattered bodies of Spanish children killed by the Madrid bombings (evocative of the photographs of fascist atrocities Woolf alludes to in *Three Guineas*) accompanied by the rousing caption: ‘Look on these pictures and resolve, blow for blow, man for man, shall be our reply until the arms of democracy have won the only way to peace.’⁹⁸ Unlike her *Daily Worker* editors, and much of the AIA who ‘Why Art To-Day Follows Politics’ aimed to defend, Woolf did not support the opposition of fascism by force. Her pacifist sentiments remain unspoken, however, within the pages of a newspaper that now promoted war as the only way to secure peace.

Even without voicing her pacifism Woolf’s arguments in ‘Why Art To-Day Follows Politics’ jarred with the Marxist outlook of the *Daily Worker*. The paper’s editors printed the following disclaimer above her article:

While very glad to print this article by Virginia Woolf in our pages, we must, of course, point out that it is not entirely our view that she expresses.

We doubt whether artists in the past have been so peacefully immune from the conditions and issues of the society in which they live as she suggests, and we feel sure that we can learn quite a lot about ‘the political condition of the age or the country’ in which Titian Velasquez, Mozart or Bach, lived by examining the works which they have left us.⁹⁹

Yet Woolf also agrees here that the practice of art breeds in the artist, as in the writer, so strong ‘a feeling for the passions and needs of mankind in the mass’ that ‘the artist is affected as powerfully as other citizens when society is in chaos.’¹⁰⁰ In the current state of public unrest, she implies, the artist may no longer be ‘absolved from political duties’ and society may no longer ‘consider[] itself repaid’ by works of art alone.¹⁰¹ Woolf prompts her readers to question the validity of the widely-held assumption that art and politics should not mix even as she herself presents isolation from politics as art’s ideal state.¹⁰² She concludes ‘Why Art To-day Follows Politics’ with a statement of the artist’s responsibility to involve himself in politics ‘when society is in chaos,’ given that faced with the imminent destruction of his society and surrounded by voices demanding

⁹⁸ ‘Nazi Bombs Kills Seventy Spanish Children,’ *Daily Worker*, 12 November 1936, 5.

⁹⁹ Editorial statement, *Daily Worker*, 14 December 1936, 4. The *Daily Worker* was launched on 1 January 1930 as a mouthpiece for the CPGB and its editors were largely drawn from the party; see Hugo Dewar, *Communist Politics in Britain: The CPGB from its Origins to the Second World War* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), 85-87.

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, ‘The Artist and Politics,’ 232.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 231.

he become ‘the servant of the politician,’ the artist cannot remain apathetic.¹⁰³

Prominent political comment might damage the aesthetic integrity of art, she reasons, but as a citizen, worker and intellectual, the artist cannot be expected to ignore the serious threat that fascism and war present to his society, his profession and his existence. With art as her primary subject, and in the context of the militantly political *Daily Worker*, Woolf writes more candidly and less reproachfully on the fusion of politics and aesthetics in this article than at any other point in the decade.

Turning back to the subject of literature in 1940, Woolf produced her final contribution to the debate on the relationship between aesthetics and politics in ‘The Leaning Tower.’¹⁰⁴ First published as a Hogarth prose pamphlet, this late essay focuses on the importance of class to the politicised literature of the 1930s. Woolf originally delivered ‘The Leaning Tower’ as a speech to a meeting of the Workers’ Educational Association in Brighton on 27 April 1940, before revising it to be published by the Hogarth Press in the autumn. On 23 April 1940 she told Hugh Walpole:

I’ve got to lecture—upon you among others—to the Brighton working classes on Saturday. Modern trends they want to hear about [...] ‘Hugh Walpole,’ I say, is an aristocrat. [...] Aristocrat intellectually, I add. And what comes next? Aldous Huxley I suppose: T. S. Eliot I suppose. Auden. Spender.¹⁰⁵

Primarily addressed to a male working-class audience, ‘The Leaning Tower’ contains a forthright discussion of how the strict delineations of British class structures and the exclusivity of Britain’s public schools and universities have shaped the development of English literature. ‘It is a fact, not a theory,’ Woolf contends, ‘that all writers from Chaucer to the present day, with so few exceptions that one hand can count them, have sat upon the same kind of chair—a raised chair.’¹⁰⁶ This text provides a thorough explication of the socio-economic privileges on which the writer’s ‘ivory tower’ is founded with an emphatic claim that this elitist tower is crumbling. Increased class mobility, mass unemployment, poverty, social unrest, and the threat of war, Woolf argues, combined in the interwar period to make its writers suddenly ‘acutely [...]’

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁴ Virginia Woolf, *The Leaning Tower* (London: Hogarth, 1940); later republished in *CE* 2. All references in this thesis are to the *CE* version.

¹⁰⁵ *L* 6: 394.

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, ‘The Leaning Tower,’ 168.

conscious of their middle-class birth; of their expensive educations.’¹⁰⁷ Woolf reads the politicisation of literature in this era as a response to this awareness. She identifies ‘the bleat of the scapegoat’ in the professed socialist leanings of this generation’s literary output; unable to whole-heartedly abuse a social system that provides them with ‘a very fine view and some sort of security,’ she contends, these writers ‘very naturally [...] abuse society in the person of some retired admiral or spinster or armament manufacturer; and by abusing them hope to escape a whipping.’¹⁰⁸ ‘Discomfort; pity for themselves; anger against society’ are ‘all very natural tendencies’ for Britain’s interwar writers to feel, Woolf allows, but nonetheless rebukes them for permitting these emotions to show in their poetry and prose.¹⁰⁹

Woolf’s discussion of the social and economic conditions that have influenced literature produced in Britain from 1815-1940 in ‘The Leaning Tower’ draws on and elucidates the distinction made in ‘Why Art To-day Follows Politics’ between art’s relation to politics in peacetime and the artist’s social role in times of political chaos. Beginning at the start of the nineteenth century, during which ‘England, of course, was often at war,’ Woolf charts the influence of battles, empire-building and defence abroad, and, more significantly, ‘the peaceful and prosperous state of England’ at home on the production of literature in the preceding century.¹¹⁰ The imperial wars in which England was engaged throughout the nineteenth century engendered a state of social stability and economic growth that precipitated the rise of the thriving middle class at home from which the majority of writers and intellectuals were drawn. Woolf suggests that war ‘did not affect [...] the writer’ in the nineteenth century since the ‘rumour of battles took a long time to reach England.’¹¹¹ ‘Wars were then remote’ and ‘carried on by soldiers, not by private people,’ she argues:

The proof of that is to be found in the work of two great novelists—Jane Austen and Walter Scott. Each lived through the Napoleonic wars; each wrote through them [...] [but] neither of them in all their novels mentioned the Napoleonic wars.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

In *Between the Acts*, it may be worthwhile to observe, Woolf evokes the Napoleonic wars and their effect on England's landscape within the first page, as if countering her sense of this previous omission through a playful gesture to the forthcoming oblique but pervasive presence of the current war in her own text.¹¹³ The proliferation of political literature in contemporary literature, Woolf argues in 'The Leaning Tower,' is the result of changes in how wars are fought and reported in the twentieth century.

Woolf makes a distinction between nineteenth-century wartime and the wartime of the modern age, which begins for the purposes of 'The Leaning Tower' in 1914. Emphasising the primitive communications of the pre-industrial era, Woolf asserts that 'It was only when the mail coaches clattered along the country roads hung with laurels that the people in villages like Brighton knew that a victory had been won and lit their candles and stuck them in their windows.'¹¹⁴ 'Compare that with our state to-day,' she declares:

To-day we hear the gunfire in the Channel. We turn on the wireless; we hear an airman telling us how that very afternoon he shot down a raider; his machine caught fire; he rose to the top and was rescued by a trawler. Scott never saw the sailors drowning at Trafalgar; Jane Austen never heard the cannon roar at Waterloo. Neither of them heard Napoleon's voice as we hear Hitler's voice as we sit at home of an evening.¹¹⁵

This passage reflects Woolf's contemporaneous efforts to include resonances of war on the home front in *Between the Acts* and 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,' a short essay written in the midst of the Battle of Britain in August 1940 for a women's symposium in America.

Woolf imagines the above scene far more vividly in 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,' which is written from the perspective of a woman in bed, 'lying in the dark and listening to the zoom of a hornet which may at any moment sting you to death.'¹¹⁶ She sends notes of air raids, of 'the drone of planes,' of the loudspeakers crying 'Hitler!' and of her conviction that 'a subconscious Hitlerism' lives in all patriarchal societies to 'the men and women whose sleep has not yet been broken by machine-gun

¹¹³ BA, 5. The Napoleonic wars first appear in page 7 of the ETS, composed April-May 1938; PH, 37.

¹¹⁴ Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower,' 164.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,' in CE 4, 173.

fire, in the belief that they will rethink them generously and charitably’ and perhaps find in them a way to ‘think peace into existence.’¹¹⁷ The novel, set in the prelude to war, alludes covertly to the signifiers of wartime identified in the two essays. The ‘drone of the trees,’ ‘of the garden,’ sounds early in *Between the Acts* as an overture to the drone of the twelve aeroplanes that interrupt Reverend Streatfield’s speech at the close of the pageant, zooming past in battle formation.¹¹⁸ The mix of patriotic songs and disjointed rhetoric from Miss La Trobe’s gramophone, Michele Pridmore-Brown identifies, imitates and exposes the emotive power of the radio broadcasts through which Britain heard Hitler’s threats and was rallied by Winston Churchill during the war.¹¹⁹ Bart Oliver’s revelation that the Channel is ‘thirty-five [miles] only’ from Pointz Hall and Giles Oliver’s reference to the ‘sixteen men [...] shot, others prisoned, just over there, across the gulf in that flat land which divided them from the continent’ ominously signal Britain’s close spatial and temporal proximity to war.¹²⁰ In ‘The Leaning Tower,’ ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid’ and *Between the Acts* Woolf gestures to the revolutionary impact that technological developments – the radio and military aircraft – have had on Britain’s experience of warfare.¹²¹ Far from remote, Woolf suggests, wars are now fought and experienced as well as reported on the home front. Writers of the twentieth century are more exposed to war than ever before.

‘The Leaning Tower’ both sustains Woolf’s previous distrust of art that includes explicit political argument and recognises the impossibility of writers producing literature that ignores political events in the current climate. The appearance of the

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 174-177.

¹¹⁸ *BA*, 11, 20, 114-145. The droning first appeared in the ETS version of the novel during April-May 1938 as the ‘drone of the breeze’ (*PH*, 47). It then took on a more sinister tone towards the end of the first draft when Woolf wrote the appearance of the droning aircraft in ‘perfect formation’ that zoom past during Reverend Streatfield’s speech (*PH*, 166). Leaska dates the composition of this later section of the ETS to the summer of 1940; the Battle of Britain began in July 1940.

¹¹⁹ Michele Pridmore-Brown, ‘1939-40: Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism,’ *PMLA* 113: 3 (1998): 411.

¹²⁰ *BA*, 20, 30. The location of Woolf’s fictional Pointz Hall remains a mystery. Evidently the house’s location only mattered to Woolf in as much as it was rural, isolated, and with regard to its distance from the English Channel. In the ETS draft the Channel is ‘Seventy-three miles’ away (*PH*, 59); in the Later Typescript (LTS), written after November 1940, it is at first ‘eighty-three’ and then ‘thirty-five’ (*PH*, 280). By moving Pointz Hall closer to the Channel Woolf evokes the threat of invasion felt during the Battle of Britain in 1940. Her intention to convey this threat is further evidenced by an evocative adjacent remark from Lucy Swithin in the LTS (omitted in the finished novel); ‘They call it the North Sea now [...] not the German ocean. But why? [...] how could she explain to her niece what she was thinking’ (280).

¹²¹ See Gillian Beer for a comprehensive discussion of how Woolf’s literary output reveals the effect that the coming of the aeroplane had on the English’s conception of themselves as an island nation in ‘The Island and the Aeroplane: The Case of Virginia Woolf,’ in *Woolf: The Common Ground*, 149-178.

Battle of Britain in *Between the Acts* through repeated references to the droning sound of aircraft, despite the novel being set a year before the event, is one example of how Woolf's final aesthetic production blends art with current affairs. As she argued in 'Why Art To-day Follows Politics,' the two are not easily isolated from one another in times of social chaos. With the exception, perhaps, of *Mrs Dalloway*, *Between the Acts* engages with contemporary political events more overtly than any of Woolf's previous novels. Yet this novel also follows the trend of Woolf's earlier fiction in camouflaging her cultural criticism within the narrative. Her politics reveal themselves through the course of the novel's action and dialogue rather than in authorial comment. In line with her earlier statements on the relation between art and politics in 'A Letter to a Young Poet' and 'The Leaning Tower,' *Between the Acts* does not overtly introduce a political agenda, although the novel's sensitive portrayals of the repressed inner thoughts of female outsiders Lucy, Isa and Miss La Trobe evidently reflect Woolf's feminist-socialist concern to depict those aspects of human experience not recorded by the predominantly male literary canon. The novel also expands Woolf's cultural criticism of the past decade by itself addressing the question of art's role in wartime.

In contrast to Woolf's earlier writings on the subject in the 1930s, in *Between the Acts* Woolf loses her implicit trust in art's ability to humanise. Isa scans the shelves of the Oliver family library for a 'remedy [...] as a person with a raging tooth runs her eye in a chemist's shop over green bottles' but nothing she finds there relieves her intense negative feelings.¹²² Isa's lethargy and dejection haunt the reader throughout the novel, a product of her age, we are informed, 'the age of the century, thirty-nine,' before eventually emerging in a quiet declaration of despair with the sudden downpour that interrupts the pageant 'like all the people of the world weeping' just before its final scene.¹²³ 'O that our human pain could here have ending!' Isa murmurs, with a stylised pronouncement that echoes Bernard's final soliloquy in *The Waves*: 'Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!'¹²⁴ Bernard's individual confrontation with death becomes a collective cry of angst as Isa speaks as a representative for a generation confronting the recurrence of mechanised warfare on an international scale. What place can there be for art, Woolf's final novel asks, in such a

¹²² BA, 14.

¹²³ BA, 14, 107.

¹²⁴ BA, 107; W, 228.

socio-political climate? What audience can there be to receive it? Miss La Trobe attempts to use the pageant as an opportunity to turn her audience's focus on themselves but her experiment comes close to failing. As the cast appear with scraps of old tin cans, candlesticks and broken mirrors to expose to the audience their distorted appearance in the final scene, 'Present time. Ourselves,' only Mrs Manresa can bear to face her own reflection as she unashamedly reddens her lips in the glass.¹²⁵ Art's social role in *Between the Acts* is far from secure and its power to enrich the civilization from which and for which it is produced is less than certain.

Yet *Between the Acts* is a highly intertextual work, laden with fragmentary allusions to contemporary and canonical poetry, drama and prose as well as folkloric sayings and references to popular culture. Literature represents a constant tradition from which we might learn, and through which we find the words and phrases to interpret and express our reactions to public and private events. 'Book-shy [...] like the rest of her generation,' Isa continually quotes (and misquotes) from literary texts in the novel as if in an attempt to discover a narrative through which to understand her life and the age in which she lives.¹²⁶ Faced with her feelings of disgust and hatred towards her husband she continually falls back on a cliché 'conveniently provided by fiction' to reassure herself of her love for this man; 'The father of my children.'¹²⁷ The novel never quite reveals whether such linguistic clichés can provide any practical assistance to a relationship, to a society, or to an international community on the brink of conflict. Rather than affirming the importance of England's literary heritage as an elevating and civilizing force, the elusive intertextuality of *Between the Acts* presents literature as shattered into pieces and unable to offer shelter from the onslaught of night and violence which hovers portentously at the novel's close.

Language itself threatens rebellion in *Between the Acts*. As the Pointz Hall family sit down after lunch to watch the pageant, a passage of free indirect discourse informs us (Isa is its likely source but the narration is unclear): 'Words this afternoon ceased to lie flat in the sentence. They rose, became menacing and shook their fists at you.'¹²⁸ This strange assertion refers in part to the strained conversation of Giles and

¹²⁵ BA, 105.

¹²⁶ BA, 14.

¹²⁷ BA, 11.

¹²⁸ BA, 38.

Isa, but also, more ominously, to language's potential to intimidate, manipulate and prompt violent actions when used as a tool of oppression. This power is seen in the following paragraph as Giles viciously summarises his opinion of William Dodge, the Oliver family's unassuming and subdued homosexual lunch guest, who here provides Giles with 'another peg on which to hang his rage':

A toady; a lickspittle; not a downright plain man of his senses; but a teaser and twitcher; a fingerer of sensations; picking and choosing; dillying and dallying; not a man to have straightforward love for a woman [...] but simply a—. ¹²⁹

Giles's malicious alliterative rant ends with a word 'he [can] not speak in public' although Isa guesses it and mentally rebukes Giles for his train of thought; 'Well, was it wrong if he was that word? Why judge each other?' ¹³⁰ This silent verbal attack on William plays out in miniature the persecution of numerous social, religious, ethnic and intellectual minorities at that moment under Fascist regimes across Europe. Woolf's distrust of words in an earlier essay, 'Craftsmanship,' delivered as a radio broadcast on 20 April 1937, is echoed and politicised in *Between the Acts* as she links the unreliability of language to her sense of the harm that words, when used as propaganda, can inflict on human life. ¹³¹ Roger Fry similarly sensed the subjective, potentially harmful nature of language, as Woolf noted in her 1940 biography; as a result of this subjectivity he questioned whether literature 'could be considered an art.' ¹³² The depiction of words as rebellious in Woolf's final novel reflects her own anxieties about the aesthetic legitimacy of wartime literature and her deep concern that language might fail her, as a literary artist, at this time of political crisis.

In 'A Letter to a Young Poet' and 'Why Art To-day Follows Politics' Woolf presented art as the product by which society shows itself to be civilized which should, therefore, show no traces of barbarous sentiments. Her final novel complicates these assumptions about art's social role by problematising the civilized/barbarism binary. Giles, an apparently 'civilized' individual – college educated, a stockbroker, the class of man who, on arriving home to visitors, changes for lunch – is shown to harbour barbarous instincts behind his calm exterior through his behaviour in the novel. His

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *BA*, 39.

¹³¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Craftsmanship,' in *CE* 2, 245-251.

¹³² *RF*, 193.

malevolent treatment of his wife and William Dodge, and his violent action of stamping dead the snake choking on a toad, both serve to illustrate how England's 'civilized' values, propagated by its patriarchal, bourgeois society, are upheld by barbarism. An anonymous voice warns the pageant audience in the closing speech: '*Consider the gun slayers, bomb droppers here or there. They do openly what we do slyly.*'¹³³ Likewise, Woolf suggests, language and literature may do slyly what militaristic actions do outright. Art cannot fail to show the stains of its producers' implicit barbarism; whether this is revealed by the privileged, male, middle-class outlook of the nineteenth-century's canonical texts that Woolf identified in 'The Leaning Tower,' or in the angry, leftist poetry of the 1930s. In the face of international conflict Woolf admits in *Between the Acts* that art cannot be expected to humanise and literature cannot provide Isa with a cure or escape from the socio-political chaos of her age. 'For [Isa's] generation the newspaper was a book,' the omniscient narrator of *Between the Acts* observes; confronted with reports of refugees, economic crisis, Central European military conflict, and the rape of a young girl in a barrack room by English soldiers, reality is too strong for Isa to find comfort in Keats, Shelley, Yeats, Donne, a life of Garibaldi or Lord Palmerston. Even science – Eddington, Darwin, Jeans – or a report of *The Proceedings of the Archæological Society of Nottingham* cannot stop her 'toothache.' Yet in this list of books that Isa scans on the library shelves we find a process of intellectual digging into England's literary, cultural, social, biological and geological past through which Woolf continues to believe that English society might learn and remodel itself.

England: Past, Present and Future

Woolf portrays England's social and cultural history in *Between the Acts* through a present moment that is paradoxically located in the past. This dating, and the tension it creates between the future imagined by the characters of the novel for themselves and the future readers of the novel know to be approaching, perhaps reflects Woolf's intention early in the novel's evolution to write *Between the Acts* as a theatrical piece. Referring to the work by its first working title on 9 May 1938 Woolf recorded: 'Pointz

¹³³ BA, 111.

Hall is to become [...] a play.’¹³⁴ In the event she wrote only the pageant sections of the novel as drama but traces of her earlier intention may still be found in her later setting of the work in mid-June 1939. The Reverend Streatfield’s declaration at the close of the pageant that the afternoon’s entertainment has raised ‘a sum of thirty-six pounds ten shillings and eightpence [...] towards our object: the illumination of our dear old church’ is laden with dramatic irony, Beers observes, for the novel’s first readers ‘well knew’ that ‘the blackout was about to be imposed just beyond the book’s ending.’¹³⁵ Woolf’s readers are therefore aware as the novel’s characters cannot be that the illumination of the church, and the villagers’ current parochial objectives, will soon become obsolete in the face of pressing international concerns. *Between the Acts* may not explicitly adopt the feminist-pacifist outlook of *Three Guineas*, but Woolf’s satirical portrayal of pre-war English society in this novel conveys the same cautions against patriotism and localised thinking. An intensely self-reflexive work, *Between the Acts*, like *Three Guineas* and *The Years* before it, attempts to induce a self-reflexive reaction in its readers. Just as Miss La Trobe urges her audience to objectively survey their society in the pageant, Woolf too, in *Between the Acts*, prompts her readers to look closely at themselves. ‘Throughout the novel,’ Sallie Sears notes, the characters ‘seem to be speaking lines’ as they ‘theatricalize’ their lives in order to deflect the threat of war.¹³⁶ The action of the novel plays out as if in scripted dialogue through scenes that represent an age now lost to Woolf’s immediate readers, mirroring the Pointz Hall audience’s detached viewing of the village pageant. Woolf’s final novel supplies her readers with a critique of England’s recent and distant past in the hope that it might enrich their understanding of England’s present social and political position, and therefore perhaps affect their aspirations for that society’s future.

The pageant-play form appealed to several modernists in the interwar period, as Esty details, including Forster, Eliot and Woolf.¹³⁷ Pageantry had both an ancient and a recent history for these writers, as ‘one of the ur-genres of English Literature ... a folk practice from which subsequent literary forms descend,’ and as the modern pageant-play, a form reinvented and popularised in Britain by Louis Napoleon Parker in 1905

¹³⁴ *D* 5: 139.

¹³⁵ *BA*, 114; Beers, ‘*Between the Acts*: Resisting the End,’ 126.

¹³⁶ Sallie Sears, ‘Theater of War: Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,’ in *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 213.

¹³⁷ Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, 55.

and much utilised by professional pageant producers and community dramatic groups through the Edwardian period.¹³⁸ In Edwardian times, Esty notes, pageants ‘were the Hollywood epics of their day, complete with ornate special effects, the proverbial cast of thousands ... elaborate sets and huge temporary grandstands for pageant week.’¹³⁹ Crucial to the success of the professional pageant, Deborah Sugg Ryan observes, ‘was the participation of the general public as actors – known as pageanteers – in huge numbers, averaging 5,000.’¹⁴⁰ The twentieth-century historical pageant was closely related, Ryan suggests, to the revival of the nineteenth-century imperial exhibition; Oxford pageant master, Frank Lascelles, notably staged the Pageant of London at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924.¹⁴¹ In the 1930s pageants were still often performed on Empire Day (24 May), the birthday of Queen Victoria. These plays became a communal method of chronicling English history from Roman times to the Revolution (never beyond the seventeenth century in order to avoid class conflict), with ‘the hero of the piece ... a provincial town instead of a celebrated saint.’¹⁴² Miss La Trobe’s choice of England, ‘[a] child new born,’ as the heroine of her ‘island history’ pageant moves from a localised outlook to an apparently fiercely patriotic stance.¹⁴³ Yet it soon becomes apparent that she chooses England as her focus not to glorify but to critique it.

Miss La Trobe’s anti-nationalistic portrayal of English history in the pageant details England’s cultural and social history with little concern for political events, military victories or defeats. The various scenes, dating from England’s divide ‘from France and Germany’ to the ‘Present Time,’ attempt to prompt an objective view of changes in attitude, material living conditions and domestic arrangements of past ages while spoofing their literary forms.¹⁴⁴ Middle English oral poetry, Restoration comedy, the nineteenth-century music hall and the Edwardian comedy of manners are all parodied through the pageant. The audience reacts diversely to this unorthodox spectacle, which appears very different to the popular Empire Day pageant-plays with

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁴⁰ Deborah Sugg Ryan, “‘Pageantitis’: Frank Lascelles’ 1907 Oxford Historical Pageant, Visual Spectacle and Popular Memory,” *Visual Culture in Britain* 8: 2 (2007): 64.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 66-67. For Woolf’s attendance at and response to this exhibition see Chapter 2, 101-103.

¹⁴² Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, 56-57.

¹⁴³ *BA*, 48.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

their customary rousing finale with marching and singing and the audience's participation in a chorus of 'God Save the King.'¹⁴⁵ The Pointz Hall men view the pageant with condescension and irritation: 'All our village festivals [...] end with a demand for money,' Bart declares severely with a snort; 'Let's hope to God that's the end,' Giles gruffly asserts following the skit on the Victorian family.¹⁴⁶ Following the final scene, when Miss La Trobe reveals her cast and audience to be '*Liars most of us. Thieves too,*' the audience are divided on whether the pageant was 'brilliantly clever' or 'utter bosh.'¹⁴⁷ An anonymous voice muses 'why leave out the Army, as my husband was saying, if it's history?'¹⁴⁸ By leaving out the familiar militaristic elements expected of an Empire Day pageant, the 'Grand Ensemble [...] Army; Navy; Union Jack' that Mrs Mayhew is disappointed to find lacking, Miss La Trobe challenges her audience's conception of history, which is, her literary-based pageant emphasises, itself just a story.¹⁴⁹ Her narrative of England's past depicts changes in those aspects of social experience – marriage, for example, and family relationships – which indicate how little human emotions and behaviour differ between different historical periods.

Isa regards Lucy Swithin 'as if she had been a dinosaur [...] since she lived in the reign of Queen Victoria,' but to Lucy herself, the Victorians were only 'you and me and William dressed differently.'¹⁵⁰ Lucy's conjecture prompts William to respond: 'You don't believe in history.'¹⁵¹ Although her view may contradict a linear historical narrative, it is precisely this simultaneously objective and empathetic view of earlier generations that Woolf wishes her readers to adopt with regard to the past in *Between the Acts*. Seeing the Victorian family depicted in the pageant at first Mrs Lynn Jones, also having lived through the reign of Queen Victoria, begins to reminisce. 'Oh but it was beautiful,' she protests as 'Home, Sweet, Home' warbles satirically from the gramophone.¹⁵² Her sentimentalised view here echoes Peggy's view of her Aunt Eleanor's past as they travel together in the 'Present Day' section of *The Years*. During their awkward conversation, fractured by the difference in generation, Peggy tries 'to

¹⁴⁵ See Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, 57.

¹⁴⁶ BA, 105.

¹⁴⁷ BA, 111, 117.

¹⁴⁸ BA, 117.

¹⁴⁹ BA, 106.

¹⁵⁰ BA, 104.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² BA, 103.

get [Eleanor] back to [...] the 'eighties,' a time that to her niece, a child of the post-war generation, seems 'so interesting; so safe [...] so beautiful in its unreality.'¹⁵³ Peggy cannot imagine the less idyllic, restrictive aspects of Eleanor's youth that have unfolded earlier in the novel. Having lived in the late Victorian period, however, Mrs Lynn Jones in *Between the Acts* is able to remember something 'perhaps "unhygienic" about the home,' and finds herself comparing 'Papa's beard' and 'Mama's knitting' unfavourably with her son-in-law's clean shaven face and her daughter's refrigerator.¹⁵⁴ 'Change,' she acknowledges, 'had to come'; 'or there'd have been yards and yards of Papa's beard, of Mama's knitting.'¹⁵⁵ Comparing her children directly with her parents, as if had they been born in a different sequence each might have lived the life of the other, allows Mrs Lynn Jones to investigate that 'unhygienic' aspect she suspects in the often sentimentalised Victorian family unit. Echoing Woolf's attempts in *The Pargiters* to show her female readers 'what you were like fifty years ago' so that they might benefit from knowledge of the past, 'that perspective which is so important for the understanding of the present,' in *Between the Acts* Woolf supplies her readers through the pageant with an overview of England's social history to help them critique their own time, insofar as they are able to reflect on how and why their current society has evolved to its present state.¹⁵⁶

Woolf's final novel highlights throughout that personal histories are written by circumstance; born in a different time, into a different social position or in a different place, she asks, who might we have been? Isa plays the role of Giles's dotting wife through her actions in the novel but her inner monologues show her striving to live other lives; via the poetry she writes 'in the book bound like an account book,' for example, or in her lustful fantasy of being in love with 'the romantic gentleman farmer.'¹⁵⁷ *Between the Acts* is an ensemble piece with each of the characters in some way acting a part within their lives and the narrative in a manner which mimics the villagers' taking up and stripping off of roles within the pageant. Eliza Clark of the village shop 'look[s] the age in person' as she issues from the bushes as Queen Elizabeth; Lucy Swithin takes the part of Bart Oliver's younger sister in the novel, as

¹⁵³ Y, 316.

¹⁵⁴ BA, 103.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ TP, 9.

¹⁵⁷ BA, 11-12.

she has done throughout life, although the pageant makes her feel that she might have been Cleopatra.¹⁵⁸ While conveying the potential each person has to develop into a different persona depending on their environment, Woolf also suggests the presence of ‘essential’ characteristics within each human being. Eliza Clark’s regal role within the pageant is presented as an extension of her everyday role as shopkeeper; her ability to ‘reach a flitch of bacon or haul a tub of oil with one sweep of her arm’ is fundamental to her commanding appearance as Elizabeth I.¹⁵⁹ This questioning of the influence of nature over nurture in *Between the Acts* reflects Woolf’s reading of Freud in 1939.¹⁶⁰

Between the Acts fearfully contemplates Freud’s assertion in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (first English translation published in 1922) that the ‘uncanny and coercive characteristics of group formations ... [can] with justice be traced back to the fact of their origin from the primal horde.’¹⁶¹ Both across the Channel in Spain, Italy and Germany, and at home in Britain, during the late 1930s and early 1940s Woolf had repeatedly seen proof of Freud’s contention that within contemporary social structures as in the primal horde, ‘The leader of the group is still the dreaded primal father’ and ‘the group still wishes to be governed by unrestricted force.’¹⁶² *Between the Acts* confronts Freud’s theory that the group ideal will always govern the ego by asking, through the repressed figures of Isa and Lucy Swithin, whether it is possible for human beings in the collective to fight their ‘extreme passion for authority’ and rebel against their ‘thirst for obedience.’¹⁶³ In *Three Guineas* and ‘Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid,’ Woolf retains faith that society might escape the sub-conscious Hitlerism and desire to be enslaved that facilitates the rise of dictatorships and war. In *Between the*

¹⁵⁸ BA, 52; BA, 92.

¹⁵⁹ BA, 52.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Began reading Freud last night,’ Woolf recorded in her diary on 2 December 1939, writing of the experience as an attempt to ‘take on new things’ (D 5: 248). Yet in a letter to John Lehmann on 15 July 1939 she had previously reported reading Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* (L 6: 346). In *Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Gabrielle McIntire doubts whether Woolf had really failed to read Freud until 1939 as she claimed, arguing that ‘this date represents a belated confession of her familiarity with his work, since she had directly encountered Freud as early as 1924 when she set the type for the Hogarth Press’s *International Psychoanalytic Library*’ (148). Whether Woolf knew Freud’s work intimately before this year or not, his theories evidently became particularly interesting to her at this point as Woolf makes several references to ‘gulping [him] up’ in her diary between December 1939 and June 1940 (D 5: 249).

¹⁶¹ Sigmund Freud, ‘The Group and the Primal Horde,’ in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1949), 99. Woolf recorded reading ‘Freud on Groups’ in her diary on 17 December 1939 (D 5: 252).

¹⁶² Freud, ‘The Group and the Primal Horde,’ 99.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

Acts she portrays a divided outlook; it may now be too late for Lucy to rewrite her identity as Cleopatra, the novel suggests, but Isa, born a generation later, might have a chance to revolt against her subjugated position within the Oliver family and society as a whole. Woolf continues to resist the belief that England is destined to remain endlessly patriarchal and militaristic in her final novel, foreseeing an opportunity for this society to build itself a new future, and for humanity as a whole to realise its hitherto unrealised egalitarian, peaceful part, following a return to the primeval.

Woolf's view of history in *Between the Acts* fluctuates from a vision of social change affected by historical trends, and a vision of change enacted by revolution. Her final prediction of England's imminent return to a primitive state, 'before roads were made, or houses,' through which a new English society might be born suggests that history is cyclical rather than linear.¹⁶⁴ Aspects of England's class system which appear to be eternal are shown in *Between the Acts* to be potentially transitory in comparison to the landscape and people on which this system is based. The Olivers and Pointz Hall are youngsters in comparison to the community that surrounds them, even though they are the area's most significant landowners. 'Mitchell,' the surname of the delivery boy who brings the Olivers' fish, along with local place names 'Bickley,' 'Waythorn,' 'Roddam,' and 'Pyeminister,' were all, we are told, 'in Domesday Book.'¹⁶⁵ Lucy, through marriage, likewise belongs to an Anglo-Saxon heritage that predates William I's successful invasion of England in 1066: 'The Swithins were there before the Conquest.'¹⁶⁶ The Olivers, in contrast, Bart considers, 'couldn't trace their descent for more than two or three hundred years.'¹⁶⁷ The prosperous, upper-middle-class condescension Bart Oliver and his family symbolise are shown to belong to a relatively recent phase in English history, which is, therefore, more vulnerable to change than those old local family and place names that have existed since before the first recorded census. 'In *Between the Acts* ... [the] present is prehistory,' Gillian Beer insists: 'Whenever the action of the historical pageant falters it is saved by the unwilling resurgence of the primeval: the shower of rain, the idiot, the cows bellowing for their

¹⁶⁴ *BA*, 130.

¹⁶⁵ *BA*, 21.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

lost calves.’¹⁶⁸ ‘June 1939 is the prehistory to a coming war which, the book makes clear without hysteria,’ Beer continues, ‘may mark the end of this society.’¹⁶⁹ Yet this end, although surveyed as a cause of potential sadness in the novel, is also viewed as the possible beginning of a new society. This portrayal recalls contemporary responses to war in the interwar period, during which, as Overy documents, a second world war ‘came to be regarded simultaneously as the likely cause of the death of civilization but also a possible way to purge the old age and to start again.’¹⁷⁰

The fertile effects of the primeval displayed in *Between the Acts*, indicated as nature repeatedly breathes energy back into the waning pageant, suggests that the impending primitive violence with which the novel ends may bring forth new life for England, just as the fight and consequent embrace played out by Giles and Isa at the novel’s close might bring ‘another life’ into the world.¹⁷¹ Lucy Swithin’s repeated vision of England’s prehistoric existence as a swamp, with ‘[n]o sea at all between us and the continent,’ undercuts the conception of England as ‘an island nation’ and suggests an alternative life for England within Europe.¹⁷² Woolf’s pacifism is suppressed in her final novel due to her acceptance that in the present moment of 1941 pacifism cannot end war. It continues to be reflected in her intellectual resistance to patriotism, however, and in her internationalist outlook, earlier expressed in *Three Guineas* with the famous declaration: ‘As a woman my country is the whole world.’¹⁷³ Her internationalist position is closely tied to her feminist politics but internationalism also represented a broader political position as occupied by Leonard Woolf. Leonard’s internationalist politics were evidenced in *International Government* (1916), a work Virginia Woolf predicted would be ‘a great success’ on 26 January 1915.¹⁷⁴ The work was indeed influential, encouraging the British government to promote the establishment of a League of Nations following World War I in which Leonard was involved until its collapse in the mid-1930s.¹⁷⁵ At the close of the 1930s Leonard lost his belief in the power of reason to bring an end to the present international conflict,

¹⁶⁸ Gillian Beer, ‘Virginia Woolf and Prehistory,’ in *Woolf: The Common Ground*, 18.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 5.

¹⁷¹ *BA*, 129.

¹⁷² *BA*, 20.

¹⁷³ *TG*, 313.

¹⁷⁴ *D 1*: 26.

¹⁷⁵ Victoria Glendinning, *Leonard Woolf: A Life* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 484.

arguing in *The War for Peace* (1940) that ‘the question’ had now become ‘whether, when this war ends, it is or not possible to regulate and organize the relations of Europeans and their states in such a way that periodic great wars become improbable.’¹⁷⁶ The word ‘improbable’ rather than ‘impossible’ here indicates his distance from his wife’s absolute pacifism. Yet her depiction of the future for English society in *Between the Acts* seems to pose the same question as Leonard’s *War for Peace*, if in a more imaginative fashion. The novel ends with a scene that asks the reader to consider what new future might be born for England in the post-war period that will follow the conflict. The stripping away of ‘roads,’ ‘houses,’ and all other cultural signifiers in the novel’s final image of two figures facing one another in a barren, primitive landscape indicates that this future will not be governed by existing national boundaries.¹⁷⁷ Throughout the novel references to current affairs and to prehistory insist on the need for England to refashion itself as an active and co-operative member of a wider European community.

Through the transmission of news reports (whether of recognisable events or of events with an authentic ring), the characters of *Between the Acts* are forced to confront the myth of England as a secure island nation.¹⁷⁸ The story Isa reads in the newspaper of the rape of a young girl lulled by English soldiers to see a horse with a green tail recalls closely a report in *The Times* of the trial of three soldiers from Whitehall Barracks accused of the same crime.¹⁷⁹ The presence of this reference in the novel contradicts the propagandistic vision of the English soldier as defender of his country’s women and children and, by extension, the allegory of England as an island protector of her people. Giles’s reference to sixteen men dead across the Channel, that stretch of water Lucy so often imagines not to exist, similarly erodes the idea of England as isolated and protected from continental Europe by highlighting the country’s temporal and spatial position as part of European history in the making. The Jewish refugees alluded to as a recent subject seen ‘in the papers’ act as a warning to the Pointz Hall

¹⁷⁶ Leonard Woolf, *The War for Peace* (London: Routledge, 1940), 3.

¹⁷⁷ *BA*, 130.

¹⁷⁸ For an investigation of this myth, its history and its pervasive influence within English culture see Beer, ‘The Island and the Aeroplane,’ 154-159.

¹⁷⁹ *BA*, 15; ‘Two Troopers Found “Guilty”: Trial Of Third Man Opened,’ *The Times*, 29 June 1938, 11. For a full account of this event in contemporary newspapers and Woolf’s use of it see Stuart N. Clarke, ‘The Horse with a Green Tail,’ *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 34 (1990): 3-4. Woolf included the reference in her first draft of the novel written, Leaska estimates, between June and July 1938 (see *PH*, 54).

residents of the looming diffusion of their own community, ominously emphasised by the gramophone's chant '*Dispersed are we.*'¹⁸⁰ With no actors left to thank at the close of the pageant, William turns to thank Lucy Swithin for his afternoon's entertainment; 'Putting one thing with another,' the narration considers, taking on the thoughts of William, 'it was unlikely that they would ever meet again.'¹⁸¹ A young man, William knows his future lies far away from the quiet countryside of Pointz Hall if 'one thing [and] another' results in the likely outbreak of war. The action of preparing for, attending, and discussing the pageant in *Between the Acts* creates a momentary oasis from the march of contemporary events but the characters cannot ultimately escape this march or England's proximity to Europe and the coming war.

'Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen!' cries Miss La Trobe in the pageant's final speech; '*ask how's this wall, the great wall, which we call, perhaps miscall, civilization, to be built by [...] orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves!*'¹⁸² Optimism in *Between the Acts* might be found in the modernist concept of multiple selves which appear in the novel as 'unacted parts.' Miss La Trobe's final cry begs the pageant audience to consider how they might resist their inherited desires for wealth, domination, heroism, patriotism and conformity, and break off from these hereditary selves to act another part carved out on their own terms, and so build a civilization on a new set of values. The image of society as a procession that the last chapter of this thesis traced through the variant texts of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* appears again in *Between the Acts* as Isa stands in the stable yard alone, imagining herself as the 'last little donkey in the long caravanserai crossing the desert.'¹⁸³ 'This is the burden that the past laid on me,' she reflects.¹⁸⁴ Isa joins Rose, Maggie, Sara Pargiter and the narrator of *Three Guineas* in Woolf's cast of female characters who must decide whether to continue to follow society's desert procession or to turn away and start out on their own. Isa's coming together with Giles in the novel's final scene, as predicted by Miss La Trobe's visualisation of 'two figures, half concealed by a rock,' suggests the possibility

¹⁸⁰ BA, 74, 116.

¹⁸¹ BA, 123.

¹⁸² BA, 111.

¹⁸³ BA, 93.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

of both men and women of the younger generation using the experience of war as an opportunity to set out on a new track.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

Overall, Woolf's cultural criticism in *Between the Acts* is understandably less optimistic than in her previous works of the 1930s but the 'last two pages of the novel' are not, as Roger Poole has argued, 'entirely bereft of hope.'¹⁸⁶ At the close of the novel, Woolf clings onto the belief that individuals might resist the call of the dictator and ultimately build themselves a more equal, anti-nationalistic society through self-analysis and historical study. The outbreak of World War II led Woolf to contemplate a possibility which, on account of her absolute pacifism, she had hitherto resisted; that England's patriarchal framework might be overhauled through the event of violent, socio-political revolution rather than gradually, as she had predicted in *A Room of One's Own*. 'By 1939,' as Overy notes, 'Britain faced the paradoxical prospect of having to use war as a means to restore a peaceable international political and economic order.'¹⁸⁷ While Woolf, unlike her husband, was never able to acknowledge the legitimacy of war as a method to achieve peace in extreme circumstances, in the event of World War II she nonetheless began to take on aspects of a viewpoint widely articulated in British interwar public discourse, that through the current war 'civilization would be either saved or lost.'¹⁸⁸ In 'The Leaning Tower,' a wartime essay, Woolf anticipates the arrival of 'the next generation' who will be, 'when peace comes, a post-war generation too,' with the hope that unlike the interwar 'leaning-tower generation,' they will exist in a world where there are 'no more towers and no more classes and [...] we stand, without hedges between us, on the common ground.'¹⁸⁹ Her essay attracted another round of debate on art's social role and the political art of the 1930s in *Folios of New Writing* (1941), a Hogarth collection edited by John Lehmann.¹⁹⁰ Edward Upward strongly disagreed with Woolf's assessment of the leaning tower generation, arguing

¹⁸⁵ BA, 124.

¹⁸⁶ Roger Poole, "'We All Put Up With You Virginia': Irreceivable Wisdom about War,' in *Woolf and War*, 93.

¹⁸⁷ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, xix.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸⁹ Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower,' 178.

¹⁹⁰ John Lehmann, ed., *Folios of New Writing* 3 (London: Hogarth, 1941).

that ‘they ought to be praised rather than condemned’ for writing about the failure of bourgeois society.¹⁹¹ B. L. Coombes critiqued Woolf’s inaccurate view of the lower end of the class system.¹⁹² Louis MacNeice sympathised with Woolf’s aim for a post-war classless society but felt her attacks on the interwar generation were ‘inconsistent and unjust.’¹⁹³ Finally, John Lehmann attempted to locate Woolf’s provocative opinions in ‘The Leaning Tower’ in the wider context of her lifelong ‘sympathy with the struggles of working-class people, particularly working-class women, and her belief in the value of their long, historic effort to make themselves articulate.’¹⁹⁴ A foreword from Lehmann explained that these articles ‘were prepared before [Woolf’s] tragic death, but we have left them unchanged, believing she would have preferred the argument to go on.’¹⁹⁵ Considering her commitment to negotiating the role of art in times of chaos through the 1930s and in *Between the Acts*, it is fitting that the debate she opened with the younger writers of the interwar period should continue as international conflict raged on in the months following her death.

Despite her statements against mixing art with politics through 1932-1940, *Between the Acts* exhibits Woolf’s belief that the writer, as an intellectual, has a responsibility to critique contemporary culture. Her novel, like Miss La Trobe’s pageant, does not condemn its audience but rather holds up a mirror for them to see and evaluate themselves. Woolf’s final statement of cultural criticism is delivered to the reader through the Trojan horse of fiction. Her escapist picture of rural Englishness disguises a considered feminist-pacifist commentary that engages with the current international situation. Like *The Years* and *Three Guineas* before it, *Between the Acts* weaves together imaginative invention with references to real events. Through these references and the novel’s narrative Woolf deconstructs the myth of Englishness and exposes as a fallacy the belief in England’s safety and isolation from continental Europe. The members of the Pointz Hall community, of England, and of Britain as a whole, *Between the Acts* stresses, are geographically and politically part of a wider international community. Her last novel presents an oblique social and political commentary that grows out of her feminist-pacifist thinking in the preceding decade.

¹⁹¹ Edward Upward, ‘The Falling Tower,’ in *Folios of New Writing*, 25.

¹⁹² B. L. Coombes, ‘Below the Tower,’ in *Folios of New Writing*, 30.

¹⁹³ Louis MacNeice, ‘The Tower That Once,’ in *Folios of New Writing*, 37.

¹⁹⁴ John Lehmann, postscript to *Folios of New Writing*, 44.

¹⁹⁵ John Lehmann, foreword to *Folios of New Writing*, 6.

Conclusion:

Woolf and Late Modernism

Joyce is dead—Joyce about a fortnight younger than I am. I remember Miss Weaver, in wool gloves, bringing Ulysses in type script to our tea table at Hogarth House. [...] Would we devote our lives to printing it? [...] One day Katherine Mansfield came, & I had it out. She began to read, ridiculing; then suddenly said, But theres some thing [*sic*] in this: a scene that should figure I suppose in the history of literature. [...] This goes back to a pre-historic world, And now all the gents are furbishing up opinions, & the books, I suppose, take their place in the long procession.

Virginia Woolf, 15 January 1941¹

Two months before her own death, the news that James Joyce had died prompted Woolf to regard the modern fictions that she, Joyce and Katherine Mansfield had each once strived to create as relics of a pre-historic world. Early 1920s aesthetic experimentalism belonged to pre-history in Woolf's mind in part due to the extinction of many of the period's champions of avant-garde art and literature; including Joyce, Mansfield, Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry and Ottoline Morrell, all of whom she mentions in this diary entry. In addition, ongoing German air-raids were then demolishing the cityscape that this era evoked for Woolf. Her London home at 37 Mecklenburgh Square had been hit by a bomb explosion on 18 September 1940.² 'Another bad raid' the following night 'smashed' Oxford Street, the British Museum forecourt, 'all [her] old haunts.'³ On 13 January 1941 she took the 'tube to the Temple' and 'there wandered in the desolate ruins of my old squares: gashed; dismantled.'⁴ The intellectual circles and physical spaces in which Woolf had attempted, as a writer and publisher, to help bring about the modernisation of English literature were slowly being obliterated. In the early months of 1941, despite her preparation of a new novel for publication, Woolf was uncomfortably aware that the work for which she and her modernist contemporaries

¹ *D* 5: 353.

² See *D* 5: 322.

³ *D* 5: 323.

⁴ *D* 5: 353.

would be primarily remembered had already been consigned to ‘the long procession’ of literary history.⁵

Processions feature repeatedly in Woolf’s late cultural criticism as I outlined in Chapter 3. They signify a male tradition of symbolic honours, archaic rituals and emblematic clothing through which the governing classes of patriarchal British society maintain the insular progenitorial transfer of wealth and education from father to son. Woolf’s depiction of the history of literature as a procession in this late diary entry reveals her continued anxieties about the masculine impulse to monumentalise literary figures and works (detailed in Chapters 1 and 2), and her reluctance to be located in a past moment with male contemporaries whose literary tradition and outlook she did not feel herself to share. On 18 November 1940, Woolf described her ‘double vision’ as a woman writer.⁶ Considering her view of English literature alongside that of Herbert Read, whose autobiography she had lately finished, Woolf asserted:

I am carrying on, while I read, the idea of women discovering, like the 19th century rationalists [...] that man is no longer God. My position [...] is quite unlike Read’s, [H. G.] Wells’, Tom [Eliot]’s, or [George] Santayana’s. It is essential to remain outside; & realise my own beliefs; or rather not to accept theirs.⁷

Throughout her life, Woolf believed that ‘women, who have historically been outsiders and agnostics in relation to the institutions and beliefs that constitute the official version of culture, can write culture anew.’⁸ Just as she imagined women reforming British society by breaking off from the long caravan of patriarchal history (as Sara and Maggie do in *The Pargiters*), or by joining the procession of the professions on new terms (as she envisages in *Three Guineas*), through her career as a woman modernist writer Woolf hoped to overhaul the literary conventions and implicit patriarchal politics of nineteenth-century intellectual culture. Yet if ‘all the gents [were] furbishing up opinions’ and her books, along with Joyce’s *Ulysses*, were ‘tak[ing] their place in the long procession’ of literary history, then how could Woolf continue to remain outside

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *D* 5: 340.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Brenda R. Silver, ‘Virginia Woolf: Cultural Critique,’ in *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 647.

the cultural tradition that her writing sought to destabilise?⁹ The canonisation of modernism confronted Woolf with her profound fear of fixity and stasis, and of no longer being free to set out on a new path of her own.

This thesis's genetic, feminist-historicist reading of Woolf has emphasised that her journalism, fiction, literary and cultural criticism were all shaped by an experimental impulse that reflects both her creative drive and her feminist principles. Chapter 1 traced this impulse through Woolf's early journalistic career in her dissident biographical writings. Chapter 2 identified the desire for a new direction that accompanied Woolf's turn to cultural criticism in 1931 through her six *Good Housekeeping* articles. Chapter 3 emphasised the formal radicalism of Woolf's developing feminist-pacifist critiques of patriarchy in the 1930s, evidenced by the complex evolutionary process that links *The Pargiters* and *The Years* to *Three Guineas*. Chapter 4 presented Woolf's fusion of fiction with cultural criticism in *Between the Acts* as her final innovative response to the growing pressure on writers and artists at this time to comment on contemporary politics in their aesthetic productions. The close relationship between formal and political radicalism in Woolf's late writings, I have argued, undermines the integrity of viewing her oeuvre in two distinct phases, split between the modernist 1920s and the socially-engaged 1930s, and suggests the danger of applying such labels in wider narratives of interwar literature.

Such narratives have come under increasing scrutiny over the past decade following the publication of Tyrus Miller's *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction and the Arts Between the World Wars* (1999). Miller's influential appropriation of the phrase 'late modernism,' a label he applies to Anglo-American modernist art and literature from the late 1920s and 1930s, resists the 'grand narrative ... [of] beginnings: "origins," "rise," [and] "emergence"' that has dominated critical studies of modernism.¹⁰ Equally

⁹ D 5: 353. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The 1922 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 4-5. Miller notes that the phrase 'late modernism' was first coined by Charles Jencks, an architectural historian, to refer to 'the persistence in architectural practice of an avant-garde moralism, utopianism, and purist style' in the 1960s (9). Fredric Jameson was the first critic to apply 'late modernism' to literature, arguing with regard to the arts more widely that 'we should probably also make some place (but not as late as he does) for what Charles Jencks has come to call "late modernism"—the last survivals of a properly modernist view of art and the world after the great political and economic break of the Depression'; see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1992), 305.

eager to turn ‘this historiographic telescope the other way round,’¹¹ Jed Esty (2004) examines ‘the relationship between shifting concepts of English culture and shifting aesthetic practices of canonical modernist writers’ in the 1930s.¹² In *Modernism and World War II*, Marina MacKay (2007) uses ‘late modernism’ as ‘a way of reading modernism through its longer outcomes rather than its notional origins.’¹³ To conclude this project I would like to position Woolf’s late cultural criticism in the wider context of modernism’s evolution in the 1930s and beyond. The next section outlines interactions between Woolf’s late cultural criticism and contemporary discussions of late modernism, before finally this conclusion closes with an evaluation of genetic criticism’s role in this project and its current and potential application within Woolf scholarship.

Woolf as a Late Modernist

It may be surprising that Woolf was able to look back in 1941 and view herself, Joyce, Mansfield and their 1920s literary milieu as part of ‘the history of literature,’ but the now familiar narratives of English modernism were already well under construction by the 1940s.¹⁴ Modernist writer-critics, including T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Woolf, themselves shaped early responses to the experimental poetry and fiction of the new century through their literary criticism. Definitions of the modernist movement, Miller suggests, grew out of and continue to draw on the ‘figurative and evaluative underpinnings of modernism itself.’¹⁵ As early as 1931 Harold Nicolson grouped together Woolf, Eliot, Joyce, D. H. Lawrence and Evelyn Waugh as modernist writers in a BBC radio broadcast.¹⁶ Writing on contemporary verse in 1932, F. R. Leavis identified Eliot as the most influential modern poet whose output, along with that of Pound and Gerald Manley Hopkins, ‘represent[ed] a decisive re-ordering of the tradition

¹¹ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 5.

¹² Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 15.

¹³ Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15.

¹⁴ *D* 5: 353.

¹⁵ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 5.

¹⁶ Harold Nicolson, ‘The New Spirit in Modern Literature,’ *Listener*, 30 September 1931; quoted in *L* 4: 402, *n* 1. ‘Lord—how tired I am of being caged with Aldous [Huxley], Joyce and Lawrence,’ Woolf responded in a letter to Hugh Walpole: ‘if [...] [Harold] sweeps us all into separate schools [...] then he’s utterly and damnably wrong, and to teach the public that’s the way to read us is a crime’ (*L* 4: 402).

of English poetry.’¹⁷ By 1940, as MacKay notes, ‘John Lehmann could summarise modernism without sounding a false note: the major novelists were Joyce, Woolf, Lawrence, Stein and Hemmingway; Eliot was the major poet, with honourable mention of the older Yeats.’¹⁸ Such early accounts of English modernism have since been vigorously and variously rewritten, notably by feminist and post-colonial critics who, from the early 1990s, have pertinently challenged the predominantly male, Anglo-American modernist canon established by the Leavises and the New Critics through the mid-twentieth century.¹⁹ Contemporary modernist critics talk of ‘modernisms,’ using the plural to indicate the expansion of their field of study to include a diverse array of new modernist canons.²⁰ Yet the ‘broad and richly embellished story’ of modernism’s ‘creation out of the spirit of revolt against the nineteenth century,’ Miller emphasises, continues to dominate ‘the diversity and contradictory nature of opinions about what modernism is (or was).’²¹ This emphasis on rebellion and innovation, on ‘the Poundian imperative to “Make It New”,’ has resulted in ‘a disproportionate amount of critical attention’ on modernism’s early development through the 1910s and 1920s.²² By directing their attention towards late modernism, Miller, Esty and MacKay aim to redress this balance by exploring modernism’s evolution during the late 1920s and into the 1930s and 1940s. These critics’ perception of modernism as a group of ‘distinctive

¹⁷ F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938), 195.

¹⁸ MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, 15. MacKay here refers to John Lehmann’s summary of the aesthetic experimentalism that preceded the new writing of the 1930s in *New Writing in Europe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940). Within the novelists, Lehmann notably names ‘the chief figures [as] James Joyce and Virginia Woolf,’ prefiguring Woolf’s anxiety about her books joining the procession with Joyce in her January 1941 diary entry (*New Writing in Europe*, 15).

¹⁹ Highly influential to the reinstatement of female and post-colonial writers to the English modernist canon in the 1990s (including Mansfield, H. D., Mina Loy, Rebecca West and Jean Rhys) is *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). For an authoritative and insightful discussion of the scapegoating of women’s writing within American modernism see Suzanne Clark, *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

²⁰ Peter Nicholls’s *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1995) used the term ‘modernisms’ to signify the diversity of European modernism. The plural form has since been used to signal the emergence of the ‘new modernist studies,’ the recent turn in contemporary modernist criticism towards texts and writers not previously identified as modernist, with a particular interest in expanding modernism temporally (as Miller attempts) and geographically, and with a greater sensitivity to issues of gender, race, the rise of new media and the economics of cultural production; see Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, eds., *Bad Modernisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) and Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, ‘The New Modernist Studies,’ *PMLA* 123: 3 (2008): 737-748.

²¹ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 5. A notable exception to this trend, Miller acknowledges, is Bonnie Kime Scott’s two-volume *Refiguring Modernism*, 1: *The Women of 1928*; and 2: *Postmodern Feminist Readings of Woolf, West, and Barnes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

aesthetic modes that were not monolithic or static but capable of development and transformation' corresponds neatly with genetic criticism's stress on textual fluidity and reinforces this thesis's reading of Woolf's late cultural criticism as an extension of her earlier experimentalism.²³

The drive to 'Make It New,' the slogan that Pound used to title his 1934 essay collection and cited in Canto LIII (published in 1940), remained strong amongst modernists in the late 1920s and 1930s as the movement's established and newer practitioners sought to refresh and redirect the innovative impulses on which modernist aesthetics had been founded.²⁴ Pound's continued production of the *Cantos*, Eliot's experiments with verse drama in the late 1920s and 1930s, and Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), for example, all evidence the persistent attempts of canonical modernist writers to push high modernism beyond its theoretical first phase in this later period.²⁵ Within Woolf's late output, *The Waves* and *Between the Acts* most obviously reflect this desire for modernist rejuvenation. However, as this thesis has argued, Woolf's public emergence as a cultural critic in her last decade also represents a feminist and aesthetic commitment to do something new. Following her completion of *The Waves* in February 1931, Woolf feared that she had reached a point of creative and intellectual stasis, 'toss[ing] among empty bottles & bits of toilet paper,' while her contemporaries moved with the times and were 'modern.'²⁶ Her turn to cultural analysis in her *Good Housekeeping* articles at this point and, more substantially, in *The Pargiters* project that occupied her from 1931-1938 (finally morphing into *The Years* and *Three Guineas*), represents an attempt to move into new political and aesthetic territory. Yet while Esty and MacKay regard Eliot and Woolf as late modernists, Miller would not place Eliot, Joyce, Pound or Woolf in this grouping.²⁷ His study focuses instead on 'a new generation of late modernist works,' here represented by the later writings of Wyndham

²³ MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, 15.

²⁴ Ezra Pound, *Make It New: New Essays by Ezra Pound* (London: Faber, 1934); Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber, 1964), 275.

²⁵ Eliot's first attempt at drama was *Sweeney Agonistes* (1926-1927); the project was never completed as a play but was later published as dramatic verse. A brief experiment with the pageant-play form in *The Rock* (1934) introduced Eliot to the 'possible role for the Chorus' (Letter to *The Spectator*, 8 June 1934, 887). In his first two full plays, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and *The Family Reunion* (1939), both of which reflect his conversion to Anglicanism, Eliot further explored the possibility of a modern-day choric verse. See *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969).

²⁶ D 4: 12.

²⁷ Esty's Chapter 2 reads Eliot's *The Rock* and Woolf's *Between the Acts*; MacKay's study includes a chapter each on *Between the Acts* and Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943).

Lewis, Djuna Barnes, Samuel Beckett and Mina Loy, whose literature appeared as a reaction to, as well as ‘in tandem with a still developing corpus of high modernism.’²⁸

‘Newness’ was significant not only to modernism in the 1930s, but also, more emphatically, to the backlash against modernism in this decade. The economic and political crises of the late 1920s and 1930s, outlined in my introduction, impacted dramatically on the outlook of writers producing and emerging at this time and the concerns of the audience who received them. The titles of a number of periodicals from the period stress innovation and the present moment – *Experiment*, *Venture*, *New Verse* and *New Writing* – but here ‘newness’ appears ‘less a commitment to formal experimentation than to a faithful rendering of the everyday, sometimes in an antiestablishment or populist vein or more directly working-class cause.’²⁹ In negotiating a relation to their literary predecessors not every 1930s magazine ‘found it ... easy ... to dismiss the literary modernists of the 1910s and 1920s,’ but many were conscious of a responsibility to break into ‘a new realm on behalf of a new generation.’³⁰ In *New Signatures* (1932), the Hogarth collection that first introduced W. H. Auden, Cecil Day-Lewis, Stephen Spender and others as the politicised writers of the new decade, Michael Roberts explicitly declared their ‘clear reaction against [the] esoteric poetry’ of the preceding generation.³¹ In Chapter 4 I detailed Woolf’s long-standing debate with the younger *New Signatures* generation through the 1930s, culminating in their varied responses to her *Leaning Tower* pamphlet in Lehmann’s *Folios of New Writing* (1941). Woolf distrusted these writers’ overt fusion of art and politics yet her own fiction in this period smuggled in cultural criticism alongside references to current affairs, evidencing the increased importance of facts, real events, and journalistic research to her writing in this decade.

‘Writing politically committed literature represented one obvious and, to many, attractive way for writers to break out of [the] evident predicament’ of modernism, Miller contends, interpreting the output of Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis and George

²⁸ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 10.

²⁹ Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, introduction to Part VIII ‘Commitment to the New,’ in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Britain and Ireland 1880-1955*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1: 591-592.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 592, 598.

³¹ Michael Roberts, introduction to *New Signatures* (London: Hogarth, 1932); quoted in Brooker and Thacker, *Modernist Magazines*, 591.

Orwell as ‘a brief but fascinating’ moment when writers of the 1930s ‘found ways of holding in tension political and literary demands.’³² Miller emphasises that ‘despite the general sense of the thirties as a highly politicized decade, many other important writers could not and did not link their writing to the vicissitudes of political engagement.’³³ With its covert political commentary, Woolf’s late fictional output suggests that the impact of politics on the decade’s literature may well have been greater than Miller acknowledges. His survey of 1930s politically committed literature is markedly limited, yet his angle of vision intriguingly discloses a way of viewing the explicitly politicised writing of Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis and Orwell alongside the works of late modernists as evidence of ‘the lines of flight artists took [when] an obstacle, the oft-mentioned “impasse” of modernism, interrupted progress on established paths.’³⁴ Throughout the 1930s, both modernists and modernism’s adversaries prioritised the ‘new’ as each searched for fresh methods to respond aesthetically to global economic depression, a changed political climate, and rising social and international tensions. Miller’s reading thus indicates a valuable parallel between two literary groupings usually viewed in opposition.

Late modernism’s attempts to recapture ‘newness’ are read by Miller, Esty and MacKay as evidence of the movement’s troubled responses to the growing social and political instability of a new era. ‘Facing an unexpected stop,’ Miller contends, ‘late modernists took a detour into the political regions that high modernism had managed to view from the distance of a closed car.’³⁵ ‘Their literary structures tottered uneasily between vexed acknowledgment and anxious disavowal of social facts,’ he claims, suggesting ‘a *failure* to repress, a failure of the forms to contain the turbulent historical energies that sweep through late modernist works.’³⁶ Esty and MacKay advance this exploration into the changing historical circumstances that shaped modernism in its later stages. From different perspectives, both critics focus on modernism’s reactions to the breakdown of empire in the 1930s and 1940s. Esty explores ‘the anthropological turn’ through which English high modernists began to interrogate national consciousness in

³² Miller, *Late Modernism*, 31.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 32 (emphasis in original).

their late works.³⁷ The pageant-play form employed by E. M. Forster, Eliot and Woolf, for example, Esty asserts, discloses ‘two desires that signal a late modernist transition: (1) the desire to mount a more participatory model of art production (as against the aesthetic virtuosity of high modernism), and (2) the desire to connect more directly with a public of art consumers (as against the cloistered alienation of high modernism).’³⁸ Like Esty, MacKay investigates late modernism’s public contributions to the national concern with English identity and views this final phase of the movement’s development as ‘a point of transition ... between imperial Britain and the devolved archipelago it turned into.’³⁹ In contrast to Esty, MacKay examines late modernism’s responses to World War II, an event sidestepped in Esty’s study, but which MacKay asserts ‘is surely related to the island’s shrinkage ... [and] may even be the acceptable idiom for speaking of it.’⁴⁰ All three critics depict the stylistic and thematic innovations of late modernist writers as a consequence of their sense of the pressing need to engage with a wider reading public and to offer political comment through their literary works.

At first glance, Woolf’s literary output during 1930-1941 seems to fit perfectly into the collective paradigm of late modernism offered here. The development of her late cultural criticism in this period corresponds to these critics’ conviction that modernism evolved in its later stages to exhibit an increased awareness of its social and political context and to engage more directly with its audience. Woolf’s preface to *Life As We Have Known It*, published in 1931, disclosed her early 1930s desire to expand her developing analysis of contemporary gender roles and the historical oppression of women to include the relation of middle-class women to labouring-class women, and to create a space in this debate for labouring-class women to voice their position. *Flush* and *The Years*, each subtly experimental in form and slyly critical of nineteenth-century patriarchal British society, proved by their high sales to engage a wider audience than any of her previous works. *Three Guineas*, despite its intensely innovative structure, offered Woolf’s most direct and comprehensive feminist-pacifist critique of the interconnectedness of patriarchy, patriotism and war to date. *Between the Acts* reflected overtly on England’s fears at the end of the interwar period and, covertly, on Britain’s

³⁷ Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁹ MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

position in the current moment of World War II, while also signalling an aesthetic return to high modernism in framework and style. Woolf's writings clearly became more socially-engaged in her last decade while continuing to utilise and develop modernist narrative techniques.

To interpret the latter half of her oeuvre through the perspective of late modernism as conceived by Miller, however, requires that we accept the contention that high modernism, including Woolf's early output, was not already profoundly interested in its audience and had indeed 'managed to view [politics] from the distance of a closed car.'⁴¹ 'Too often modernism has been seen as an alienated, alienating form of creative production,' MacKay contests, choosing to focus on 'public modernism' in her study.⁴² There may be cause for disputing the conception of late modernism explored by these three critics, particularly Miller and Esty, on the basis that their reading of late modernism as a reaction against apolitical high modernism relies on the illusion of modernist marginality that MacKay identifies.⁴³ Certainly in the case of Woolf, this thesis has emphasised, her modernist output, whether 'high' or 'late,' is rarely devoid of implicit social comment and, from the first, was closely linked to her feminist politics.

'The mastery and, indeed, the revolution of the word were accomplishments prized among male modernists and the critics who canonized them,' Bonnie Kime Scott contends, but 'Woolf was more skeptical.'⁴⁴ As a woman modernist, she had less sympathy than some of her contemporaries with the idea of literary form as 'the modernist gold standard ... the universal currency in which aesthetic value could be measured and circulated.'⁴⁵ It was perhaps in part for this reason, along with her prudish prejudice against its 'indecenty' and the then limited capabilities of the Hogarth Press, that the Woolfs decided not to 'devote their lives to printing' Joyce's *Ulysses*.⁴⁶ After receiving the lengthy manuscript from Harriet Shaw Weaver on 18 April 1918 Woolf described the novel as 'an attempt to push the bounds of expression further on, but still all in the same direction.'⁴⁷ To push form forwards in one direction was not

⁴¹ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 13.

⁴² MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, 20-21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁴ Scott, *Refiguring Modernism* 2: 1.

⁴⁵ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 31.

⁴⁶ *D* 5: 353.

⁴⁷ *D* 1: 140.

enough for Woolf. Her conviction that novelists should ‘record the atoms as they fall upon the mind’ and ‘not take it for granted that life exists more in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small’ was inherently bound to her feminist desire to ‘break [...] and bully’ the novel form into a more suitable shape to express the experience of life encountered by men and women in modern times.⁴⁸ In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf famously argued that a new literary tradition was needed for women writers, one that would admit and respect subjects usually deemed trivial by men (themselves restricted by their faulty education) in order to allow women to write ‘as women write, not as men write.’⁴⁹ From Toril Moi (1985) to Judith Allen (2010), feminist critics have repeatedly emphasised the importance of ‘locating the politics of Woolf’s writing *precisely in her textual practice*.’⁵⁰ Recognising the gendered politics of language, Woolf’s aesthetic experimentalism pushed ‘beyond words and images, at a new relation to tradition and audience.’⁵¹

From the outset of her career, Chapter 1 of this thesis demonstrated, Woolf’s biographical journalism subverted both the form and the cultural values of nineteenth-century biography. Her early modernist fictional experiments similarly challenged both the formulaic structure of the Victorian and Edwardian novel, with its ‘thirty-two chapters’ and rigid plot, and the patriarchal values that had shaped the expected content of this literary genre.⁵² The anonymous stream of consciousness that narrates ‘The Mark on the Wall’ (1917), Woolf’s earliest published experimental fiction, urges the reader to consider:

the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard, which established Whitaker’s Table of Precedency, which has become, I suppose, since the war half a phantom to many men and women, which soon, one may hope, will be laughed into the dustbin where the phantoms go, the

⁴⁸ Virginia Woolf, ‘Modern Novels’ (1919), in *E* 3, 33-36.

⁴⁹ *AROO*, 97.

⁵⁰ Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995), 16 (emphasis in original); Judith Allen, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010). See also, in particular, Pamela L. Caughie, *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism: Literature in Quest & Question of Itself* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) and Jane Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-impressionism, and the Politics of the Visual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵¹ Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*, 2: 1.

⁵² Woolf, ‘Modern Novels,’ 33.

mahogany sideboards and the Landseer prints, Gods and Devils, Hell and so forth.⁵³

Far from apolitical, this high modernist short story uses interiority to engage its audience in a moment of feminist critique that points forward to Woolf's late cultural criticism in several ways. The portrayal of patriarchy as a nineteenth-century 'phantom,' along with 'the mahogany sideboards and [...] Landseer prints' of the Victorian age, parallels Woolf's vision of 'the Angel in the house' in her 'Professions for Women' speech in January 1931 as 'a phantom [...] the ideal of womanhood created by the imaginations of men and woman [...] in the age of Victoria.'⁵⁴ The direct reference to the ongoing war with Germany as the instrument of exposing this phantom, as well as contradicting Miller's notion of high modernist form as a set of protective gloves 'meant to hold the world of aggravated political struggle at bay,' foreshadows Woolf's presentation of war as an expression and logical consequence of patriarchal values in *Three Guineas*.⁵⁵ The allusion to Whitaker's *Almanack* also anticipates *Three Guineas*, in which Woolf turns to Whitaker for 'cold facts' to illustrate women's continued exclusion from public institutions and comparative economic disadvantage in relation to men.⁵⁶ These resonances should once more remind us that while the timing of Woolf's increased commitment to cultural analysis and her public emergence as a cultural critic in the period 1930-1941 represents a response to contemporary political events, the direction and themes of her late cultural criticism were less the result of the pressure of historical circumstances than an expansion of her earlier feminist thinking, evidenced in both her fiction and her criticism from the period 1904-1930.

'As a historical category,' Miller is the first to admit, 'late modernism' stands and falls by its ability to bring to light 'a significant set of family resemblances between writers during a certain period of time.'⁵⁷ Not all the resemblances that define late modernism for Miller, Esty and MacKay apply to Woolf, but their concept nonetheless fruitfully situates her late cultural criticism within the context of a more politicised version of modernism that evolved through the 1930s and 1940s. Understanding

⁵³ *HH*, 80.

⁵⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women' typescript, M.70, in *VW: MA*, 4-6.

⁵⁵ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 31.

⁵⁶ *TG*, 280, 289.

⁵⁷ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 22.

Woolf's late writing as both politically activist and formally modernist enables us to break down and bridge the disparate narratives that read Woolf first as a 1920s high modernist and second as a 1930s social thinker. Positioning her 1930s turn to cultural criticism within a late modernism that was still striving for 'newness' also suggests possibilities for exploring how her late works anticipated future literary developments. The 'more direct, polemical engagement with topical and popular discourses' and 'satiric and parodic strategies' that Miller finds in the writing of his late modernists prompts him to read this period's output as part of the 'narrative of emergent postmodernism.'⁵⁸ Late modernism and postmodernism are not one and the same, as Miller stresses, but his perception of late modernism's 'linkage forward into postmodernism' valuably supplies another interpretative lens through which to view Woolf's perplexing formal experiments of 1930-1941.⁵⁹ The fractured 'novel-essay' structure of *The Pargiters*, mock canine biography of *Flush*, and complex narrative tone of *Three Guineas*, with its circuitous epistolary framework and scattered epitextual photographs, arguably make more sense as postmodern subversions of literary genres.⁶⁰ The prominence of self-reflexive humour, fragmented voices, and the fusion of high literary allusion with popular culture in Miss La Trobe's pageant at the close of *Between the Acts* prompts us to consider how much further Woolf might have moved towards postmodernism had she lived to write another book. Like all period concepts late modernism has its limitations, but its derivation from Miller's ambitious attempt to resist the institutionalised narratives of early twentieth-century literature, reinforced by Esty and MacKay, makes it a determinedly fluid period concept that supports this thesis's genetic interpretation of Woolf's late cultural criticism as a direct evolution from the feminist and aesthetic radicalism of her earlier writings.

Genetic Criticism and Woolf Studies

The principles of genetic criticism have been fundamental to my analysis of the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism in this thesis. As a closing reflection, the following discussion evaluates the genetic approach adopted here within a broader

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 20, 19, 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁰ See Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of Caughie's *Woolf and Postmodernism*.

appraisal of genetic criticism's current and potential application in Woolf studies. One of genetic criticism's most appealing features is its fusion of literary interpretation with textual scholarship. The discipline represents both an analytical method and an editorial practice, traversing 'criticism's soft curves and the hard linear facts of bibliography' in a manner that remains unusual within the often disparate spheres of literary studies and scholarly editing.⁶¹ Like periodical studies, a recent branch of literary criticism also applied in this thesis, genetic criticism pays careful attention to the material condition, bibliographic and contextual codes of texts. While Woolf scholarship has been quick to absorb the insights and practices of periodical studies, however, genetic criticism has taken longer to make a mark.⁶² The discipline's limited impact on Woolf criticism corresponds to a tendency across literary studies to disregard the insights of scholarly editing, as 'the broader intellectual community, whether in academe or the popular humanistic press ... [remains] remarkably unfazed by the developments in textual and editorial theory of the past twenty years.'⁶³ Within Woolf scholarship this tendency seems to be coming to an end. The publication of four new editions of Woolf's texts in the 1990s has finally prompted critics to probe 'the editorial assumptions that underpin the way Woolf's texts are currently edited.'⁶⁴ Over the last ten years the subject has become the site of much debate, evident in James M. Haule and J. H. Stape's collection on *Editing Woolf* (2002), as Woolf's editors and critics have questioned the extent to which the Hogarth, Penguin, Oxford and Blackwell editions represent critical editions in the sense understood by textual critics.⁶⁵ This debate has led to an increased critical sensitivity to the particular editing problems presented by Woolf's major works, almost all of which appear in differing first British and first American editions, and many of

⁶¹ Graham Falconer, 'Genetic Criticism,' *Comparative Literature* 45: 1 (1993): 1.

⁶² On the application of periodical studies in Woolf scholarship and the field's profound influence on studies of modernism as a whole see Patrick Collier, 'Woolf and Periodicals,' *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 76 (2009): 1-2.

⁶³ John Bryant, 'Witness and Access: The Uses of the Fluid Text,' *Textual Cultures: Text, Contexts, Interpretation* 2: 1 (2007) [journal online]; available from <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqi:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:abell:R03933780:0>; accessed 28 March 2010.

⁶⁴ Julia Briggs, 'Between the Texts: Virginia Woolf's Acts of Revision,' in *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 209. Briggs here surveys the limitations of the Woolf editions published during the temporary release of her works from copyright in Britain in the 1990s.

⁶⁵ See James M. Haule and J. H. Stape, introduction to *Editing Virginia Woolf: Interpreting the Modernist Text*, ed. James M. Haule and J. H. Stape (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 3-5. The *Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf* at the University of Denver on 19-22 June 2008 also took 'Woolf Editing/Editing Woolf' as its subject.

which are evidenced by multiple variant pre-publication and published texts due to her perpetual revision of her writings up to, and sometimes beyond, publication.⁶⁶ In this altered climate the theories of textual scholarship have become increasingly familiar within Woolf studies, a field that has long been interested in tracing textual genesis.

Manuscript analysis has been common practice within Woolf scholarship since the late 1970s when the publication of a series of Woolf's holographs made these drafts available and endowed them with significance.⁶⁷ Recognising that Woolf's working manuscripts were 'often far more explicit in their social and political attitudes' than her published works, feminist critics from the late 1970s onwards have sought to unearth the genesis of Woolf's social thinking through analysing her early drafts.⁶⁸ Manuscript study and textual criticism have been central, as Silver has highlighted, to the feminist recovery of Woolf as a social and political thinker.⁶⁹ Yet, until recently, the theories and terminology of textual criticism have been noticeably absent from Woolf studies. Even Woolf's editors have seemed reluctant to discuss their use of textual scholarship. In 1998 Edward Bishop omitted to mention genetic criticism in his edition of the holograph draft of *Jacob's Room*, although he later claimed that the discipline had greatly influenced his editorial practices (in retrospect, Bishop's decision to provide a facsimile rather than an edited transcription on the basis that the latter 'gives a false sense of completion' discloses his genetic stance).⁷⁰ Only in the last decade have Woolf's editors felt able to engage openly with textual and editing theory.

⁶⁶ On Woolf's revisions and the way her multiple variants might be edited see Briggs's 'Between the Texts' and Hans Walter Gabler, 'A Tale of Two Texts: Or, How One Might Edit Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*,' *Woolf Studies Annual* 10 (2004): 1-29.

⁶⁷ Five editions of transcriptions of early versions of Woolf's works appeared between 1976 and 1983: *The Waves: The Two Holograph Drafts*, trans. and ed. J. W. Graham (London: Hogarth, 1976); *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*, trans. and ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Hogarth, 1978); *Melymbrosia: An Early Version of The Voyage Out*, trans. and ed. Louise A. DeSalvo (New York: New York Public Library, 1982); *To the Lighthouse: The Original Holograph Draft*, trans. and ed. Susan Dick (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); and *Pointz Hall: The Earlier and Later Typescripts of Between the Acts*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (New York: University Publications, 1983).

⁶⁸ Brenda R. Silver, 'Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice: Or, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf Part II,' in *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation*, ed. George Bornstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 201.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Edward L. Bishop, introduction to *Virginia Woolf's Jacob's Room: The Holograph Draft*, trans. and ed. Edward L. Bishop (New York: Pace University Press, 1998), xxiii. See Edward Bishop, 'The Alfa and the Avant-texte: Transcribing Virginia Woolf's Manuscripts,' in *Editing Virginia Woolf: Interpreting the Modernist Text*, ed. James M. Haule and J. H. Stape (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 139-157.

Hence, despite the importance of manuscript study to Woolf studies, genetic criticism has taken a long time to receive attention within the field. Until now, for example, there has been no discussion of the possibility of a genetic, feminist-historicist reading of Woolf. Yet genetic critics have much in common with feminist-historicist readers of Woolf. Both look beyond the manuscripts before them in an attempt to recover the thought processes that shaped the literary works into which these documents evolved. Both are sensitive to the historical circumstances that are inscribed in texts, recognising every text as a stable document, tied to the specific social and cultural environment in which it was produced and part of a wider, fluctuating writing process, susceptible to development and change. Genetic criticism's post-structuralist emphasis on the instability of texts is entirely compatible with Woolf's own insistence on textual indeterminacy. This thesis therefore posits that the methodology of genetic criticism, with its materialist leanings and close exploration of textual relationships, is ideally suited to a feminist-historicist reading of Woolf. The broadly genetic approach adopted here has exposed the thinking processes that traverse Woolf's early and late oeuvre, directing the development of her feminist politics and her aesthetic practices. A genetic perspective also stresses the importance of reading forwards through Woolf's career in order to remain alert to fluctuations in her thinking. Woolf's late cultural criticism, this thesis has emphasised, evolved as it did in response to a particular set of personal concerns, political events, private and public circumstances, rather than according to any premeditated intention or plan.

Prospectively, genetic criticism's most useful contribution to Woolf scholarship is a theoretical framework for organising large collections of manuscript and published variants. Chapter 3 of this thesis explored how such a framework, based on genetic criticism's editorial and analytical methods, might be applied to a specific dossier of Woolf texts. Taking Pierre-Marc de Biasi's five-stage procedure for determining textual genesis as a starting-point, this chapter surveyed the voluminous reading notes, scrapbooks, manuscript drafts, typescripts, proofs and printed texts that evidence *Three Guineas*'s evolution, showcasing genetic criticism's capacity to bring to light relationships between these texts that might otherwise remain hidden. The discipline provides a valuable set of terms to investigate the linguistic, thematic and contextual links that bind together *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, two distinct but interrelated

works commonly regarded as a single enterprise. By demonstrating genetic criticism's usefulness for studying Woolf's extensive draft material, this chapter extends the work of two recent publications that similarly illustrate genetic criticism's value to Woolf studies: *Woolf Online* (2008), a digitised genetic edition of the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*; and the final chapter of Finn Fordham's *I Do, I Undo, I Redo* (2010), which explores the composition process through which Woolf produced *The Waves*.⁷¹

Designed as a 'case study' to demonstrate the potential for an electronic genetic edition of a Woolf text, *Woolf Online* presents digitised images and transcriptions of the initial holograph, typescript and proof versions of the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*, alongside relevant pages of the first British, first American, Hogarth Uniform and Everyman editions.⁷² If there is a future for genetic editions of Woolf it seems likely that they will be accomplished through such digital archives. Electronic resources have the capability to make large amounts of textual material available and searchable for the reader. Through allowing the reader to search the available documents and choose which they wish to display and move between, *Woolf Online* allows its users to manipulate its contents to compare two documents through a parallel-text view, to make a genetic survey of all documents, or just to read one document alone, such as the holograph draft. A collated print edition, however authoritatively and transparently edited, can never allow the texts it presents quite this degree of freedom since variants are always appended as secondary elements. An electronic genetic edition, in contrast, has the capacity to present each variant text in full, sidestepping the difficulty of choosing one textual version to act as copy-text. Thus while new, coherently edited, collated print volumes of Woolf's works, like the anticipated Cambridge Edition (forthcoming in 2010), are much needed and will hopefully provide reliable and informative reading texts for students and scholars alike, if critics and editors desire editions of Woolf's works that convey their existence in variant states then they must turn to electronic, genetic editions like *Woolf Online*.⁷³ Ideally such

⁷¹ Virginia Woolf, *Woolf Online: An Electronic Edition and Commentary on Virginia Woolf's 'Time Passes'*, ed. Julia Briggs, Peter Shillingsburg and Marilyn Deegan [Web site and database] (De Montfort University, 2008); available from <<http://www.woolfonline.com>>; accessed 26 March 2010; Finn Fordham, *I Do, I Undo, I Redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce, and Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁷² 'Woolf Online – About' [Web page], in *Woolf Online*.

⁷³ See 'The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Virginia Woolf,' in *Cambridge University Press* [Web site] (Cambridge University Press, 2010); available from <<http://www.cup.es/series/sSeries.asp?code=>

resources would also prompt genetic interpretations of the texts they make available for analysis. With this aim in mind *Woolf Online*'s editors embed their edition in 'a network of histories and contexts,' bringing together all the different stages of the novel's composition along with a mass of contextual information including contemporary newspaper reports of the General Strike of 1926, during which Woolf was writing, in order to allow the archive's users to construct their own contextualised readings of the material they find there.⁷⁴

Fordham's multi-author study adopts a less emphatically historicist approach to the manuscripts he surveys than *Woolf Online* or this thesis. *I Do, I Undo, I Redo* contends that genetic criticism can usefully facilitate examinations of the relation between the self and writing in modernist literature through analysing the 'processes of self-formation, self-transcendence, [and] self-forgetting' that appear in the manuscripts of modernist writers.⁷⁵ With its focus on subjectivity and selfhood Fordham's investigation is eager to demonstrate that genetic critics need not be so 'readily if implicitly on the defensive' against the charge that their discipline 'feeds the romantic cult of the single autonomous author,' an attack genetic criticism actively resists by favouring process over product, disregarding 'final intentions' as an editorial guide, and highlighting that texts are social objects.⁷⁶ Yet Fordham also recognises that the 'underlying story of a work's creation ... is always a social process.'⁷⁷ His survey of Woolf argues that the holographs of *The Waves* reveal how the novel evolved from a narrative about 'The mind of anybody' to a story about six subjects 'defined specifically by class,' a shift that reflects Woolf's growing awareness of the 'determining differences of social conditions' as she wrote.⁷⁸ Viewed within the context of my project, this reading of *The Waves* holographs, drafted between July 1929 and August 1931, reinforces my interpretation of Woolf's increased sensitivity to class difference at this time as she composed her introduction to *Life As We Have Known It* and further evidences Woolf's early 1930s turn to cultural criticism. A more historicist reading of

CWVW>; accessed 29 March 2010; and *The Cambridge University Press Edition of Virginia Woolf* [Web site] (St Andrews University, 2009); available from <<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~woolfed/index.htm>>; accessed 29 March 2010.

⁷⁴ 'Woolf Online – About' [Web page], in *Woolf Online*.

⁷⁵ Fordham, *I Do, I Undo, I Redo*, 13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 256.

these holographs might also make reference to the Wall Street Crash of October 1929 and the economic hardship this financial crisis brought to Britain's labouring classes, events Woolf responded to in part through her introduction to *Life As We Have Known It* and her *Good Housekeeping* essays as Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis detailed. Nonetheless, together *Woolf Online* and Fordham's volume clearly demonstrate genetic criticism's tremendous promise as an editorial and critical tool to enable historically attentive interpretations of Woolf's manuscript revisions, which can advance our understanding not only of the works these manuscripts grew to be, but also of Woolf's wider oeuvre.

The thesis has trialled the methods of genetic criticism, exploring the ways in which the discipline might be expanded to study the development of Woolf's cultural criticism through her published works. Chapters 1 and 4 illustrated how a broadly conceived genetic approach can be applied to explore the development of Woolf's social and feminist thinking through published and unpublished texts within her oeuvre; Chapter 1 by tracing the origins of Woolf's cultural criticism in her early biographical journalism, and Chapter 4 by tracing her changing reactions to art's social role through her essays of 1932-1940 and *Between the Acts*. Chapter 2 searched for the genesis of Woolf's early 1930s cultural criticism in her London essays for *Good Housekeeping*, six texts that are identical in linguistic content to the articles posthumously collected as *The London Scene* (1975; 2004) but which convey a different set of historical resonances when read within their original bibliographic coding.⁷⁹ Chapter 3 adapted the analytical and editorial processes of genetic criticism to interpret the evolution of *Three Guineas* through the diverse collection of pre-texts associated with this text. As a whole this thesis exhibits how the outlook of genetic criticism can be incorporated into a feminist-historicist survey of Woolf's manuscripts, printed works, and the thinking processes that developed through these documents.

However, it must be admitted that the assimilation of genetic criticism into a genetic, feminist-historicist approach is not without possible problems. Clearly a danger of genetic criticism is its preoccupation with recreating a transient thinking

⁷⁹ 'Meaning is transmitted through bibliographical as well as linguistic codes,' Jerome J. McGann argues in *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), describing 'bibliographical code' as 'the physical aspects of every book,' such as print quality, layout and illustrations, which may, just like the work's linguistic content, signify meaning (56-57).

process and fleeting set of historical circumstances that can rarely be conclusively determined through literary manuscripts alone. This thesis responds to that danger by evidencing its portrayal of the internal and external factors that directed Woolf's late cultural criticism through attentive references to her diary, letters and other primary historical sources, such as the newspaper cuttings Woolf collected in her 1930s research scrapbooks for *The Pargiters* and *Three Guineas*. Genetic criticism's desire for inclusiveness – to collect and document every text associated with a literary work's production – also presents a practical difficulty when applying the discipline's outlook more broadly to discuss a series of literary works or, as in the case of this thesis, a substantial portion of the vast output of a highly-productive literary career. A huge quantity of published and pre-published material relates to the development of Woolf's late cultural criticism; evidently the texts surveyed within this thesis represent a selection. Nevertheless, it is precisely because of the immense number of surviving Woolf manuscripts and pre-publication material that genetic criticism provides such a valuable apparatus for analysing her works. Thus this thesis has shown how the principles of genetic criticism might be tailored to fit the requirements of a clearly defined project within Woolf studies and a specific group of texts.

Bishop's transcription of the *Jacob's Room* holograph, Briggs's genetic edition of 'Time Passes' and Fordham's genetic reading of Woolf in *I Do, I Undo, I Redo* collectively indicate the timeliness of my application of genetic criticism within this thesis to trace the evolution of Woolf's cultural criticism. My focus here has been on Woolf's development as a cultural critic in the period 1930-1941, but my genetic, feminist-historicist analysis of Woolf's late cultural criticism also has implications for scholarly readings of Woolf's wider career. As my earlier negotiation of contemporary debates about late modernism indicates, the perception of modernism's origins in an apolitical aspiration to revolutionise aesthetics still too often leads to interpretations of Woolf that read her first as a modernist in the 1910s and 1920s, and then as a cultural critic from the 1930s until her death in 1941. Yet Woolf's late cultural criticism can also be interpreted, I have argued with reference to Miller, Esty and MacKay, as representative of a more politicised version of modernism that evolved through the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, far from apolitical, much of Woolf's early modernist fiction contains elements of cultural criticism. *Mrs Dalloway* was, after all, framed by a

desire ‘to criticise the social system, & to show it at work, at its most intense.’⁸⁰ This thesis contributes the first thorough examination of the development of Woolf’s late cultural criticism, but further investigations are needed to explore the relationship between this cultural criticism and Woolf’s social commentary in her early novels.

‘Thinking is my fighting,’ Woolf declared on 15 May 1940, as the threat of German invasion loomed and Leonard considered joining the Home Guard.⁸¹ Woolf’s late cultural criticism, this thesis has illustrated, grew out of a lifetime of politicised feminist thinking on the subject of women’s relation to Britain’s socio-political structures, customs and institutions. As her focus shifted from women’s position in society to that society itself in the early 1930s, motivated in part by the tempestuous economic and political circumstances of the period, Woolf became a public cultural critic. Her late cultural criticism was, I have demonstrated, as formally innovative as it was politically radical. Thus her late writing represents an extension of her early oeuvre, and her development as a cultural critic can be viewed as an attempt to resist intellectual stagnation, to defy canonisation as a 1920s aesthete, and to push further her literary experimentalism and feminist thinking by doing something new. From her earliest modernist fiction to her late cultural criticism, Woolf framed literature as a powerful tool, both in form and content, to rewrite, destabilise and, ultimately, to overthrow the patriarchal and nationalistic cultural values of the society around her.

⁸⁰ *D* 2: 248.

⁸¹ *D* 5: 285.

Appendix A

An Annotated List of Pre-Publication Texts

Relating to *The Years* and *Three Guineas*

The location and catalogue numbers of pre-publication texts relating to the production of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* are supplied below. For clarity this material is divided into three sections: texts relating chiefly to Woolf's composition of her speech for the London and National Society of Women's Service (L&NSWS); texts relating chiefly to the writing of *The Pargiters/The Years*; and texts relating chiefly to the writing of *Three Guineas*. However, as Chapter 3 argued, all texts listed here should be regarded as interrelated. A short annotation gives a brief description of each document. 'MS' indicates manuscript; 'TS' indicates typescript. 'BRG' indicates texts held at the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature at the New York Public Library. 'MHP' indicates texts held at the Monks House Papers archive at the University of Sussex. Documents are undated unless otherwise stated. All documents are available in VW: MA.

Holograph and Typescript Material Relating to Woolf's Speech to the L&NSWS

MATERIAL	CAT. NO.	LOCATION
MS notes for 'Professions for Women' speech, 9pp <i>In 'Articles, essays, fiction and reviews' Vol. 4, dated 21 January 1931.</i>	M.1.4	BRG
TS draft of 'Professions for Women' speech, 25pp <i>A draft of the speech with Woolf's MS corrections.</i>	M.70	BRG

Holograph and Typescript Material Relating to *The Years*

MATERIAL	CAT. NO.	LOCATION
MS draft of <i>The Pargiters</i> : a novel-essay, 8 Vols. <i>Holograph draft of <u>The Years</u>, dated 11 October 1932 – 15 November 1934: Vol. 1, 114pp; Vol. 2, 124pp; Vol. 3, 159pp; Vol. 4, 167pp; Vol. 5, 159pp; Vol. 6, 120pp; Vol. 7, 159pp; Vol. 8, 23pp.</i>	M.42	BRG

MS fragment of <i>The Years</i> , 17pp	M.41	BRG
<i>A draft of the deleted '1921' chapter, featuring Edward, Kitty and Eleanor.</i>		
MS paragraph relating to <i>The Years</i> , 1p	M.1.6	BRG
<i>In 'Articles, essays, fiction and reviews' Vol. 6, a passage relating to '1880.'</i>		
TS fragment of <i>The Years</i> , 5pp	B.4d	MHP
<i>A draft of the final section of '1910,' with Woolf's MS corrections.</i>		
TS fragment of <i>The Years</i> , 3pp	B.15.2	MHP
<i>A draft of the final section of '1910,' with Woolf's MS corrections.</i>		
TS fragment of <i>The Years</i> , 11pp	M.128	BRG
<i>A draft of '1917' – a mix of TS and proof pages with Woolf's MS corrections.</i>		
Galley Proofs of <i>The Years</i> , 83pp	M.137	BRG
<i>First Proofs, incomplete, dated 17 March 1936; pp34-40 relate to '1910.'</i>		
Galley Proofs of <i>The Years</i> , 38pp	M.138	BRG
<i>First Proofs, incomplete, dated 14 April 1936; chiefly relating to '1917' and 'Present Day.'</i>		
Page Proofs of <i>The Years</i> , 12pp	M.139	BRG
<i>Page Proofs of '1917' (some duplication with M.138), dated 15 December 1936.</i>		

Holograph and Typescript Material Relating to *Three Guineas*

MATERIAL	CAT. NO.	LOCATION
MS reading notes for <i>Three Guineas</i> , 27pp	B.16a	MHP
<i>Reading Notebook LV; containing reading notes relating to women, education and the Chartists alongside a draft fragment of Chapter 2 of <u>Three Guineas</u>.</i>		
MS notes for 'The Burning of the Vote,' 10pp	B.16b	MHP
<i>Miscellaneous notes relating to <u>Three Guineas</u> including an unfinished dramatic sketch titled 'The Burning of the Vote.'</i>		

MS notes on Women and War, 7pp	B.16c	MHP
<i>Draft passages relating to Chapter 1 of <u>Three Guineas</u>, dated 1937.</i>		
MS notes on Congreve and <i>Three Guineas</i> , 10pp	B.16d	MHP
<i>Draft passages relating to <u>Three Guineas</u> on pp8-10; dated 2 August 1937.</i>		
MS reading notes 'The inflated brown bug,' 8pp	B.16e	MHP
<i>Reading Notebook LVII; including notes relating to <u>Three Guineas</u>.</i>		
The <i>Three Guineas</i> Scrapbooks, 3 Vols.	B.16f	MHP
<i>Scrapbooks comprising of press-cuttings, MS and TS extracts; Vol. 1, 67pp, produced 1931-c.1933; Vol. 2, 59pp, produced c.1935-1937; Vol. 3, 65pp, produced 1937.</i>		
MS fragment titled 'Draft of Professions,' 11pp	M.1.6	BRG
<i>In 'Articles, essays, fiction and reviews' Vol. 6, dated 14 April 1935.</i>		
MS reading notes for <i>Three Guineas</i> , 39pp	M.30	BRG
<i>Reading Notebook XXXIII; almost all material found within B.16f, Vol. 2.</i>		
MS fragment of 'Women must Weep,' 23pp	M.40	BRG
<i>Draft passages of Woolf's article version of <u>Three Guineas</u> for <u>Atlantic Monthly</u>.</i>		
TS fragment of <i>Three Guineas</i> , 1p	M.127	BRG
<i>Corresponds to pp193-194 of 1938 edition, slight variations from published text.</i>		
MS and TS draft fragments of <i>Three Guineas</i> , 162pp	M.28	BRG
<i>This folder includes: a 90pp MS draft of Chapter 3, dated 21 September; a 41pp TS draft of Chapter 1; 21pp of miscellaneous TS; and 2pp miscellaneous MS.</i>		
TS draft of 'The Second Guinea,' 71pp	M.29	BRG
<i>57pp TS draft of Chapter 2, dated 28 June 1937, with 14pp miscellaneous TS.</i>		

Appendix B

A Transcription of the ‘1910’ After-Dinner Scene in the Holograph of *The Years*

The following appendix supplies a transcription of pages 56-67 of the fourth volume of Woolf’s eight-volume manuscript of *The Years*. These pages are taken from the after-dinner scene of ‘1910’ (spanning pages 9-84) as Maggie and Elvira (‘Sara’ in the published novel) sit down to discuss their day. The scene follows the sisters’ lunch with their cousin Rose Pargiter earlier in the chapter, after which Elvira accompanied Rose to a suffrage campaign meeting. All direct references to suffrage were omitted from the published version of ‘1910.’ Here Maggie and Elvira debate the subject at length, as discussed in Chapter 3, as they consider their dissatisfaction with patriarchal society.

Explanation of Editorial Symbols and Procedures:

<word> = an authorial insertion.

{ word } = an authorial deletion made with a horizontal line.

[word] = an editorial insertion.

[?word?] = a questionable editorial reading.

[illeg.] = an illegible word or sequence of words.

● | passage | ● = a long authorial deletion made by a single vertical stroke or wavy lines.

This portion of *The Years* holograph contains numerous deletions and rewritings. In an attempt to convey something of the complexity of Woolf’s revisions, my editorial symbols distinguish between short deletions made with a horizontal line through a word or phrase and long deletions made with a vertical stroke or wavy lines through a passage. This procedure follows the practice of Mitchell A. Leaska in his transcription of the first one and half volumes of *The Pargiters*. Page numbers, also following the practice of Leaska’s transcription, are indicated in square brackets, i.e. [I 1]. The roman numeral refers to the volume, the arabic to the page of the holograph. Spelling and punctuation have not been altered and both remain Woolf’s own.

[IV 56] we all know what the Prime Ministers promises are.”
She set the cheese on the table.

• | And then, Maggie; there was a rush of air;
The room darkened & in came a lady robed in jewels,
dressed in starlight. {“Kitty, said E.”}
Only I haven’t got the quotation right.” she added,
Kitty” said E. And Mr. [?Ferman?] drew out his
chair to admit the presence of the British peerage. | •
Bobby was the one who got into trouble in the
Boer war said Maggie
And then there’s a rush of air, & in comes Kitty
clothed in starlight.
I dont altogether agree, said Maggie, at last.
She pulled the vase of flowers {by} towards her
& began pulling about the flowers.
{Yes?} {said Elvira:} {[illeg.]} {I see what you mean,}
{[illeg.]. Any fool could}

<that wa>

I mean, she added, Rose comes here & says
{What are you doing?} {Rose {means} says,}
{There’s the meeting Rose says} – Come along, &
& get a vote. That {was} what they were saying
wasn’t it
{I was coming to that,} said Elvira.
{But} <well, perhaps,> suppose we had votes, then we should be
Englishwomen. Do we want to be Englishwomen?
I dont.’
[IV 57] Yes, but if one had a vote, one would be an Englishwoman.
I dont want to be an Englishwoman.”
She got up and threw the crumpled petals into the
fireplace. “Eton & Harrow match & all that”
she said coming back to her place again.
{M} Please Maggie, said Elvira, tell the whole
of that story from the beginning. You remember?
You came in {dressed in white satin} from the party.¹
And it was a hot summer’s night. And I
was looking out of the window, {at the moon.}
{How,} <&> I was saying to myself, {am I} how am I
going to make an coherent story out of {that}
at least six {different kinds} of {movement} <stars>;
{the moon being still; the} irreconcilable &
opposite forces <[illeg.]>; when I looked round & there
you were sitting on the bed; {& we you said,}
in white satin & you said, The man next me
leant back in his chair, putting one hand
there & the other there & said “Power,

¹ This episode, which Woolf rewrites repeatedly over the following pages, echoes the ‘1907’ chapter of *The Years*. In the published chapter Maggie returns home from a party where she has sat next to a ‘man in gold lace’ to find Sara watching the moon from their bedroom window (Y, 133).

Miss Pargiter, power", being all dressed in gold lace: ● | & then you said, I cant imagine anything more detestable, except indeed the Eton & Harrow match: & I said, Cheer up Maggie, imagine you're floating down a river. | ● And then in came Mama. <We heard> {What was odd,} {It was odd} – {hearing the} music when she came in.

● | She danced, said Maggie.

Go on from It was a hot summer's night" said Elvira.

{Yes} She danced, said Elvira. <But> Go on from "It was a hot summer's night ... It was a hot summer's night – Maggie began. | ●

Go on from there. "Power" he said, [IV 58] being all dressed in gold lace. Power he said being all dressed in gold lace, Maggie repeated after her. She laughed. Elvira waited. "He was large; he was fat," she prompted her. "{Rather} <Yes>" said Maggie. And then he turned to the lady next him?" Yes. "Who was extremely beautiful with diamonds in her hair?" "Yes."

Elvira waited again.

But as {there was} they had finished dinner, & it was now necessary to make the coffee, Maggie {said no more.} got up, & went into the kitchen. She came back with her hands full of clothes. She made the coffee & began to sew. For some time nothing was heard but the drip of the coffee, as it {it ran through} the water fell through the strainer, & the little tap that Maggie's scissors made, as she {cut} laid it on the table. She was cutting out a dress, apparently. Elvira lay back on the sofa, {reading,} now & again in a book which she opened & shut.

But perhaps we are Englishwomen" she said at length. ● | Perhaps we're born English" {she} Perhaps we cant help ourselves:

Perhaps we're born English.

{Mama was half Spanish, half French" said Maggie.

But we havent taken the oath,} said Maggie

{Not if we're women" said Maggie, because

then you dont. | ● {It may be something you cant help.} {How d'you know Maggie?}

British [?in birth?], passport, what about those?

I don't think {you} <we> can help it Maggie, we talk English.

Oh technically, I daresay" said Maggie. Birth, marriage, death certificates – But what I [IV 59] say is – she continued, {cut} {measuring} putting pins all down a hem, if you don't take a bribe, you needn't be an ass.

<a little man, does [illeg.] with bribery [illeg.]:> What Maggie says is, Elvira repeated, {scribbling} <lazily> {if you d} {the words in the margin of her book} if you don't take the bribe you needn't be an ass. Like Papa" she added.

Yes, or Edward, or – {well who would go & sit in an office all day in order to become the guardian of the}

or – Elvira prompted her, well, any of the {people} <[?toadies?]> one meets at parties

● | The toady, the [?fatter?] man <on your left> who turned to the duchess & said.. | ●

The toady, sitting on your left, then turned to the Duchess & said...? Have you seen *Rejane* in *Madame Sans Gêne*?²

{Oh yes,} & then they have to go off to offices. Ah, said the duchess, casting her eyes to heaven, My dear <what a> Lady, {I have only} [illeg.] as I am to have your society says the toady, I have only five & twenty minutes in which to write two columns of dramatic criticism for tomorrow's paper. And off {they drive} to their offices in the City. ● | Give us votes says Rose: & I'll serve the country. | ● No says the Prime Minister: Whereupon Rose says, Give us a vote & I'll run the country. Whereupon the Prime Minister says, – now Maggie, how would he put it! {though} speaking privately to the beautiful woman all in diamonds. ... I suspect there's a little {room} anteroom, leading out of the drawing-room, with two shaded lamps, arm chairs, & one soft & convenient sofa. D'you think he began by taking off his boots?

[IV 60] gold lace & so on" {she added.} Eton & Harrow match," she mumbled, for she was keeping a reserve of pins between her lips.

And then he turned to the lady in diamonds" said Elvira: "& opening out of the by drawing room

² Woolf here refers to the popular French actress Gabrielle Réjane, who starred in a production of Victorien Sardou's *Madame Sans-Gêne* (1893) in London in the mid-1890s; see Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties* by Bernard Shaw, 2d ed. (London: Constable, 1948), 1: 177-178.

Rose bites her lip
 {thats why he wont give her a vote” said Maggie}
 I see, said Maggie
 {But I said to Rose, Elvira continued}
 We have the Prime Minister in the yellow
 drawing room with the lady” said Elvira
 Well but look here, Maggie said Elvira,
 Suppose you’re the Prime Minister; or any other
 high official: like Papa for example;
 with a little red box & a sword:
 pirouetting about in front of a
 looking glass; governing the British Empire,
 you dont want a [?heavy?] skirt that cost
 £5 10. in the Westbourne Grove.”
 [IV 62] “I dont blame him in the least” said Maggie.
 If I sat in an office all day long.
 That was the very substance of what I went on to
 say to Rose—& should have said, had there been
 an opportunity. What I said was, taking Rose
 by the scruff of her heavy hot coat which cost
 5 pounds ten in the Westbourne Grove, Rose my
 fine fellow, • | Rose you indomitable {& silent}
 but silent conspirator, | • I daresay in five or ten or
 even a hundred years; but not now: thinking to myself
every patriarch has his prostitute: thinking to myself
 of all the yellow couches in little drawing rooms;
 how for generations, — but all the same, I added, ★
 • | whats to come doubles trebles in fact multiplies
 the past a million times & you wont reach the
 sum of the future: this past is nothing to | •
 time to come: so I said to Rose, Go on,
 • | Dont you be {despondent, for} downhearted,
 for {no} if you doubt | • fill up your forms
 or whatever it is you’re doing at the long table,
 {for unless} in the name of the {generations & let us
 hope, I added, that} makes revolutions of the
 years. You know Cleopatra’s needle on the
 Embankment, Maggie? A rose leaf on the top of
 that is the past; • | {the} what’s to come is the pillar.
 And why not, I said abolish yellow
 drawing rooms, & all the rest of it?
 She was | •
 fill up your forms, or whatever it is that you
 may by doing—If I hadn’t lost that
 <scrap> piece of paper, Maggie, I could be more exact,”—
 in the interest of generations yet unborn; time to come;
 {And then the meeting} {broke up. And} • | And she
 said “Are you coming to help us, or are you

honestly bored? {Not at all, I said:} | ●
 And I replied, — <She stopped.>
 [IV 63] ● | “I could have told you <all> that,” said Maggie <from
 {After all} what she said at lunch>
 <said Elvira & explain ...>
 “Now I shall write to Rose, {say—}” {Elvira}
 {throw me a pen, Maggie: Now where’s the paper got to?}
 {& explain the position.}
 {I shall begin,} My dear Rose: | ●
 In short,
 {all right, said Elvira.} I’ll put it into
 If you haven’t taken the bribe, Elvira repeated,
 you needn’t behave like a fool. {But, Maggie,
 when you write a letter you have to wrap things up in}
 Very well: where’s my pen? {Now} I’ll write {it} & tell her
 My dear Rose, she paused, with her pen in her hand,
 ● | {But} {Poor Rose, she said.} there she was, she
 murmured, sitting with her back to me at the table, very
 square very solid: | ● {My dear Rose}, – & I
 ● | shall therefore adopt a manner that is square &
 [illeg.]: My dear Rose, {no} when I left you
 this afternoon, I said, & it was entirely true,
 how pleased & indeed excited I was: that was true; | ●
 we are of opinion, Maggie & I, very
 But you can’t put things brusquely like that,
 What you must do is {to} this: here we are
 sitting after dinner in our room: Maggie & I:
 She’s sewing,—{what are you} making?—
 <I need [illeg.]> Well, <I can> leave that out. Here we are, Rose,
 Magdalena, Elvira Pargiter, & {when you
 say to us,} considering the matter, with the aid
 {of Whittakers,} we conclude, that though
 we thank you, for the offer,—{that of trying}
 to become Englishwomen—{we} we conclude,
 that the disadvantages & indeed dangers of this
 <position> {proceeding},—far outweigh the benefits.
 —that’s the {way} style, Maggie: we
 [IV 64] {We gather that} we should become liable to honours
 ● | which we deplore, & to services which we abominate.
 {We sho} {It}—{that’s to say, Maggie,} we might
 {become Deans, or of} meaning by that, {[?birthplace?]},
 degrees, titles, & {can} shooting savages with
 muskets. In our opinion, the acceptance of a
 vote implies {further agreement with this} | ●
 In our opinion the acceptance of a vote makes us
 liable to honours we deplore, & to services
 which we abominate—meaning by that
 {degrees,} titles, <degrees> & shooting savages with muskets.

<surely,> Moreover, {if I} {there is the} it would be
 incumbent on us—unless we [illeg.]—to
 accept the {teaching} <[illeg.]> of the Church of England;
 {to which we are not prepared to do: &}
 to baptism, marriage & burial according to its
 decrees—& with regard to baptism, marriage,
 {burial} & the conduct of the immortal soul,
 which we are not prepared to do. {&}
 {Please direct the Prime Minister's attention
 [illegible line]}
 Since, {as far as we} to the best of our knowledge,
 we have {offered} them two or three hundred
 years, to {[illeg.]} made a fair offer to the
 state these 2 or 300 years, which offer
 has been always refused <[illeg.]>, we now {wish} to
 {withdraw some &} withdraw it, & consider
 the matter closed. {As for our educa}
 {Had} {We are} Nothing in short
 {N} would induce us, Maggie & Elvira
 Pargiter to become
 [IV 65] "I shall now take a drink of coffee & begin a
 new paragraph. Its very exhausting, being Rose"
 She threw herself back on the sofa <& lay> with her
 hands behind her head. <in an [?unbearable?]>
 <the Pargiters> "Marching on, marching {on}, she said, its a wonderful
 procession, from one end of time to the other. And time
 <wh. is from past is but a rose leaf on the top of Cleopatra's needle:
 [illeg.] {compared with times to come.} {time to come the pillar.}
 through the Our generation, Maggie, is merely the thickness of a
 thickness of the rose leaf: we're bound on an infinite voyage:
 pillar> so that in twice twelve thousand years a man [illeg.]
 <into this den, looking in at this window & {seeing us would} <will> hold
 this cave> his nose & say Pah they stink. Savages; {that's} <barbarians>
 <She sneezed> {what we are, in the eyes of the future.} {But to
 return.} To blow one's nose in a pocket handkerchief
 he'll say is an impossible outrage upon the [illeg.]
 of {civilisation} <[illeg.]>. {My dear Sir, I say to that man,}
 {And I shall say,} {she {ble} sneezed}
 {But to return: Rose} Nasty things, noses, <[illeg.]> hands,
 finger nails," She held up her hand & looked at it.
 <sewing> <sewing>
 • | And there you sit {making a curtain} by {the light of}
 {the moon} on the 6th of May nineteenhundred &
 ten, stitching curtains: | •
 {But to return}
 {Its to be a dress, said Maggie}
 {And she} came in like starlight lit with
 jewels," {she added looking at her sister}

{well} <Its not a curtain, its a> I'm making a dress, said Maggie.
 For a party? Elvira asked.
 Yes, tomorrow," said Maggie.
 Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow,"
 But to return to {this generation} the letter, <she took it up & read>
 "It would be incumbent on us, were we
 [IV 66] Englishwomen to accept the teaching of the Archbishop
 of Canterbury with regard to baptism, marriage, &
 burial, & the nature & conduct of the soul
 both here & hereafter. And that, I may say
 with the utmost emphasis, we are not
 prepared to do." {Full stop.} Well?
 {Now Maggie,} {to continue} what next <[illeg.]>
 "We hope Uncle Abels gout is better; & send him
 our best love. {Elvir <[illeg.]> Your affectionate cousin,}
 Elvira Pargiter" said Maggie.
 {No, no, no, Maggie: there must be some transition,
 said Elvira:}
 • | No, no Maggie: the art of writing which is a
 very wonderful art, | •
 Elvira dipped her pen in the ink.
 "We hope..." she began.
 • | God knows, Maggie, its a complicated
 business, she began <broke off>, {putting one sentence after
 another.} {That is,} <[illeg.]> the moment I put my pen to
 the paper, & say, as you suggest, we hope Uncle Abels
 gout is better – I {at once} see myself taking part in
 the procession, through the desert, with nothing but
 a clump of trees on the horizon; & the spears of savages;
 & hyena howling. {Very well} {What <Now> right have we}
 to break off from the procession; – from one end of
 time to the other? {Here we break} At
 {the front, I say, come to the rock} here, {I say,}
 we Magdalena & Elvira Pargiter stop & say to
 the Pargiters, Here we {take our} break off. Here
 we {make our own line through the desert,} leave you... | •
 She began & [illeg.] Its {really} a
 tremendous {affair, she said}, exciting affair" she
 said, we hope Uncle Abel's gout is better.
 [IV 67] We hope Uncle {Abels} gout {is better}" she wrote,
 added
 {But dear Elvira, said Maggie}
 Well if you feel like that said Maggie, I should
 put P.S: {we said} {have offered} {As we have offered
 our reply} {we} As our offer was repeatedly refused
 we now withdraw it & consider the matter closed.
 by
 Holding her hand up in front of her she lay for a time, silent.

<She said> Maggie went on sewing.
 And she came in like starlight clothed with ...
 I cant remember how it goes... {However, now for}
 the letter,” She took up the page she had
 written & read over:
 You see, [illeg.] Maggie, what I intend to say is, we
 have followed you ... <formidable
 now we are come to this rock: here: this & craggy
 mountain>
 <blow them a {where,} you & I Maggie turn rubbing our eyes,
 kiss> <wave our hands to the assembled company>
 taking a look round {say,} make off on a track of our
 own.”
 She lit a cigarette. Her sister made no reply.
 The long strips were being stitched together, to make a
 {curtain} skirt.
 {Finish the story of the party, Maggie,} Elvira coaxed
 her—what did the man in gold lace say
 to the lady on his left when you went to
 the party Maggie?—
 They said nothing.

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